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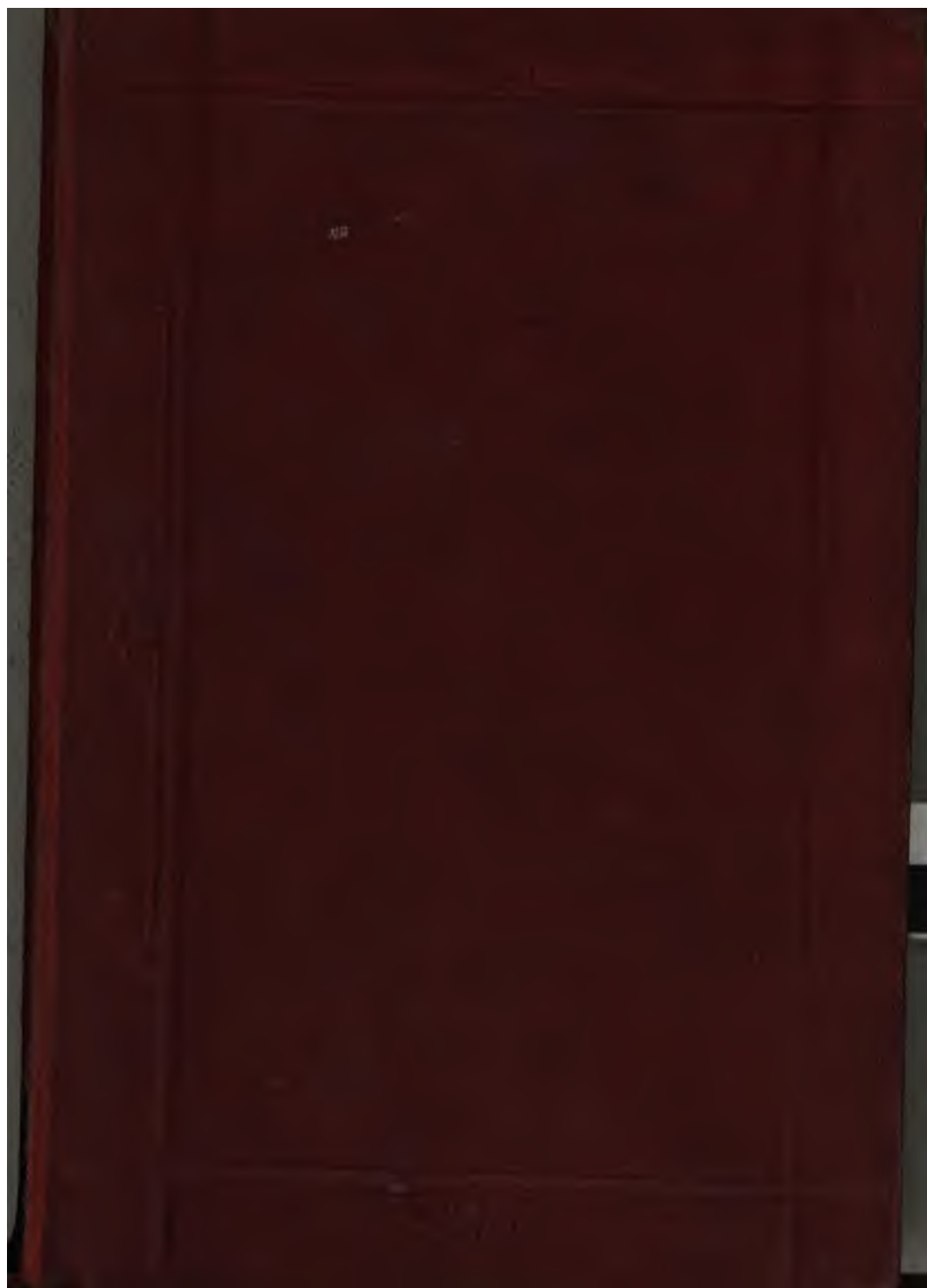
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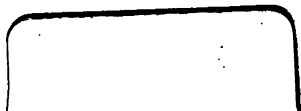








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**ONE OF THE SIX HUNDRED.**







# ONE OF THE SIX HUNDRED.

A Nobel.

BY

JAMES GRANT,

AUTHOR OF

"THE ROMANCE OF WAR," "FAIRER THAN A FAIRY," ETC. ETC.

"Half a league, half a league,  
Half a league, onward,  
Into the Valley of Death,  
Rode the Six Hundred!"  
*Tennyson.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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# ONE OF THE SIX HUNDRED.

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## CHAPTER I.

To be handsome, young, and twenty-two,  
With nothing else on earth to do ;  
But all day long to bill and coo,  
It were a pleasant calling.—THACKERAY.



WAS just in the act of humming the above verse, when the following announcement was put into my hand—

*“Regimental Orders.—Head-quarters, Maidstone,  
December 31st.*

*“As the regiment is to be held in readiness for foreign service in spring, captains of troops will report to Lieutenant and Adjutant Studhome, for the information of the commanding officer, on the state of the saddlery, the holsters and lance-buckets ; and the horses must be all re-shod under the immediate inspection of the veterinary surgeon and Farrier-Sergeant Snaffles.*

*“Leave of absence to the 31st proximo is*  
VOL. I. 1



*granted to Lieutenant Newton Calderwood Norcliff, in consequence of his urgent private affairs."*

"Hah! this is what most concerns *me*," I exclaimed, as I read the foregoing, and then handed the order-book, a squat, vellum-bound quarto, to the orderly-sergeant who was in waiting.

"Any idea of where we are likely to go, sir?" he asked.

"The East, of course."

"So say the men in the barracks; for the present, good-bye, sir," said he, as he wheeled about on his spurred heel, and saluted; "I wish you a pleasant journey."

"Thanks, Stapylton," said I; "and now to be off by the night train for London and the north. Ugh! the last night of December; I shall have a cold journey of it."

Despatching my man, Willie Pitblado—of whom more hereafter—to the mess-house to report that I should not dine there that evening, I proposed at once to start for home, resolved to make the most of the favour granted me—leave between returns, as it is technically termed.

I propose to give the story of my own adventures, my experiences of life, or autobiography



(what you will) ; and this I shall do, in the face of a certain writer, who asserts, with some truth, doubtless, that she does not "believe that there was, or could be in the world, a wholly true, candid, and unreserved biography, revealing all the dispositions, or even, without exception, *all the facts of any existence*. Indeed," she adds, "the thing is next to impossible ; since, in that case, the subject of the biography must be a man or woman without reserve, without delicacy, and without *those secrets* which are inevitable even to the most stainless spirit."

With all due deference to this fair writer, I beg to hope that such a candid spirit may exist ; and that, without violating the delicacy of this somewhat (externally) fastidious age on the one hand, and without prudish or hypocritical reserve on the other, that I, Mr. Newton Norcliff, will relate the plain, unvarnished story of a cavalry subaltern's life during the stirring events of the last ten years.

My regiment was a lancer one. I need not designate it further ; though, by the way, it has always struck me as somewhat peculiar in our cavalry of the line, that while we have our Scottish corps, the famous old Greys,



and no less than five Irish, we have not one English regiment, provincially designated as such.

I despatched a note of thanks to the colonel, handed over my cattle to the care of my friend Jack Studhome, the adjutant, and had a hasty interview with Saunders M'Goldrick, our Scots paymaster—not that I wish the reader to infer that he was my chief factor and reliance (heaven help those in a dragoon regiment who find him so!).

Glad to escape, even for the brief period of a month, from the monotony of routine parades, the stable duty, the barrack life, and useless hurly-burly of Maidstone—to be free from all bother, mess, band, and ball committees, courts-martial, and courts of inquiry; from having to remember when this parade took place, and when that particular drill, and all that sort of thing—glad, I say, to escape from being saluted by soldiers and sentinels at every turn and corner, and to be once again lord of my own proper person, I relinquished my gay lancer trappings, and resumed the less pretending mufti of the civilian—a suit of warm and strong heather-mixture tweed—and about nine o'clock P.M. found myself, with some light travelling



baggage, my gun-case, railway rugs, &c. (in care of Willie Pitblado, who was attired in very orthodox livery—boots, belt, and cockade), awaiting the up train for London, at the Maidstone station, and enjoying a last friendly chat and a cigar with Studhome, as we promenaded to and fro on the platform, and talked of the different work that would soon be cut out for us, too probably, about the time my short leave expired.

The British fleet was already in the Bosphorus; the field of Oltenitza had seen the terrible defeat of the Russians by the troops of Omar Pasha, generalissimo of the Porte, avenge the recent naval massacre at Sinope. Ere long, the Turks were to be again victorious at Citate. General Luders was about to force his way into the Dobrudcha; Britain, France, Russia, Turkey, and Sardinia, were gathering their hosts for the strife; and amid these serious events, that absurdity might not be wanting, the sly broadbrims and popularity-hunters of the Peace Society sent a deputation to the Emperor Nicholas, to expostulate with him on the wickedness of his ways.

“Egad! if the weather proves cold here, what will you find it at home, in Scotland?” said Studhome, as we trod to and fro; for



there is no knocking the idea out of an Englishman's head that the distance of some four hundred miles or so must make a more than Muscovite difference in soil and temperature ; but it was cold—intensely so.

The air was clear, and amid the blue ether the stars sparkled brightly. Snow, white and glistening, covered all the roofs of the houses and the line of the railway, and the Medway shone coldly, like polished silver, under the seven arches of its bridge, in the light of the rising moon ; and now, with a shrill, vicious whistle, and many a rapidly iterated grunt and clank, came the iron horse that was to bear me on my way, as it tore into the station, with its mane of smoke, and its red bull's-eyes that shed two steady flakes of light along the snow-covered line of rails.

The passengers were all muffled to their noses, and their breath coated and obscured the glasses of the carefully-closed windows.

Pitblado brought me *Punch*, the *Times*, and "Bradshaw," and then rushed to secure his second-class seat ; Studhome bade me farewell, and retired to join Wilford, Scriven, and some others of the corps, who usually met at a billiard-room, near the barracks, leaving me to arrange my several wrappers, and enjoy



the society of one whom he laughingly termed my railway belle—a stout female with a squalling imp, whom, notwithstanding my secret and confidential tip of half-a-crown, the deceitful guard had thrust upon me; and then, with another shriek and a steady and monotonous clanking, the train swept out of the station. The town vanished, with its county court house, barracks, river, and the fine tower of All Saints' Church; and in a twinkling I could survey the snow-covered country stretching for miles on each side of me, as we scoured along the branch line to the Paddock Wood, or Maidstone Road Junction, of the London and Dover Railway, where I got the up train from Canterbury.

Swiftly went the first-class express. The fifty-six miles were soon done, and in an hour I was amid the vast world, the human wilderness of London, even while worthy Jack Studhome's merry smile and hearty good-bye seemed to linger before me. How glorious it is to travel thus, with all the speed and luxury that money in these our days can command!

A hundred years hence how will they travel—our grandchildren? Heaven alone knows.



I was now four-and-twenty. I had been six years with the lancers, and already the novelty of the service—though loving it not the less—was gone; and I was glad, as I have said, to escape for a month from a life of enforced routine, and the nightly succession of balls, card and supper parties among the garrison hacks or *passé* belles, whose names and flirtations are standing jokes at the messes of our ungrateful lancers, hussars, and dragoon guards, wherever they are stationed, from Calcutta to Colchester, and from Poonah to Piershill.

A day soon passed amid the whirl of London, and night saw me once more seated in the *coupé* of a well-cushioned carriage for the north.

This time I was alone, and had the ample seat all to myself, thereon to lounge with all the ease of a Sybarite; and with the aid of a brandy-flask, cigars, and warm wrappers and plaids, prepared for the dreary journey of a winter night.

On, on went the train!

Lights, crimson and green, flashed at times out of the darkness. Here and there the tall poplars of the midland counties stood up, like spectres in the moonlight, above the snow-



clad meadows. Hollowly we rumbled through the subterranean blackness of a tunnel ; out in the snow and moonlight again, amid other scenes and places. Anon, a hasty shout from some pointsman would make me start when just on the eve of dropping asleep ; or it might be a sudden stoppage amid the lurid glare of furnaces, forges, and coalpits, where, night and day, by spells and gangs, the ceaseless work went on. Then it was the shrill whistling and clanking of the train, the bustle, running to and fro of men with lanterns, the banging of doors, tramping, and voices, with the clink of hammers upon the iron wheels, as their soundness was tested, which announced that we were at Peterborough, at York, or Darlington.

But every station, whether we tarried or rushed past it, seemed wonderfully alike. There were always repetitions of the same glazed advertisements in gilt frames ; the same huge purple mangold-wurzel, with its tuft of green leaves ; the same man in the hat and surtout, with the alpaca umbrella, under the ceaseless shower of rain ; Lea and Perrin's sauce-bottles ; somebody else's patent shirt ; the florid posters of *Punch*, the *Illustrated News*, and the *London Journal* ; and




the same parti-coloured volumes of railway literature.

Rapidly we rushed through England. Yorkshire and its Ridings were left behind, and now the Borders, the old land of a thousand battles and a thousand songs, drew near—the brave green Borders, with all their solemn hills, upheaved in the light of the faded stars.

Grey dawn of the coming day saw us traversing the fertile Merse, with glimpses of the gloomy German sea, tumbling its whitened waves upon bleak promontories of rock, such as Dunbar, Fastcastle, and the bare, black headland of St. Abb. Then, as I neared home, and saw the sun brightening on the snow-covered summits of Dirlton and Traprainlaw, many an old and long-forgotten idea, and many a sad and affectionate thought of the past years, came back to memory, in the dreary hour of the early winter morning.

I have said I was but four-and-twenty then. When I had last traversed that line of rail, it was in the sweet season of summer, when the heather was purple on the Lammermuirs, and a sea of golden grain clothed all the lovely valley of the Tyne. I was proceeding to join my regiment, a raw, heedless, and impulsive





boy, with bright hope and vague ambition in his heart, and with a poor mother's tears yet wet upon his cheek.

I had been six years with the lancers, and four of these were spent in India. While there, my dear mother died ; and the memory of the last time when I saw her kind and affectionate face, and heard her broken voice, as she prayed God to bless my departing steps, came vividly, powerfully, and painfully before me.

It was on the morning when I was to leave home and her to join the corps. Overnight, with all a boy's vanity and glowing satisfaction, I had contemplated my gay lancer trappings, had buckled on my sword, placed the gold cartouche-belt and glittering epaulettes on my shoulders.

At that moment I would not have exchanged my cornetcy for the kingdom of Scotland. These alluring trappings were the last things I thought of and looked on ere my eyes were closed by slumber, and the grey dawn of the next eventful day saw them still lying unpacked on the floor, when my poor mother, pale, anxious, unslept, and with her sad eyes full of tears, and her heart wrung with sorrow, stole softly into my room, to look for the



last time upon her sleeping boy ; and her mournful and earnest face was the first sight that met my waking eyes, when roused by a tear that dropped upon my cheek.

I started up, and all the consciousness of the great separation that was to ensue—the terrible wrench of heart from heart that was to come—burst upon me. Then sword and epaulettes, cap and plume, and the lancers, were forgotten ; and throwing my arms around her neck, as I had done in the days of childish grief, I wept like the boy I was, rather than the man I had imagined myself to be.

I was going home now ; but I should see that beloved face no more, and her voice was hushed for ever.

In that home were others, who were kind and gentle, and who loved me well, awaiting my arrival, and to welcome me. And there was my cousin Cora Calderwood—she was unmarried still.

Cora I was about to see again. It seemed long, long since we had last met, though we had frequently corresponded, for my uncle had a horror of letter-writing ; and certain it was that she had inspired the first emotion of love in my schoolboy heart, and during my



sojourn in India, and amid the whirl and gaiety of barrack-life at Bath, at Maidstone, at Canterbury, and elsewhere, her image had lingered in my mind, more as a pleasing memory connected with ideas of Scotland and my home, rather than with those of a passionate or enduring attachment.

Indeed, I had just been on the point of forming that elsewhere; but now, having no immediate attraction beside me, I began to wonder whether Cora had grown up a beauty; how tall she was, whether she was engaged, and so forth; whether she still remembered with pleasure the young playmate who had left her sorely dissolved in tears, half lover and wholly friend.

As we progressed northward, and crossed the Firth of Forth, the snow almost entirely disappeared, save on the lofty summits of the Ochil mountains, whose slopes looked green and pleasant in the meridian sun; and my friend Studhome, had he been with me, might have been much surprised in finding the atmosphere warmer north of Stirling Bridge than we found it at Maidstone—so variable is our climate.

We changed carriages at Stirling, where I was to imbibe some hot coffee, while Pitblado



looked after my baggage, and swore in no measured terms at the slowness of an old, cynical, and hard-visaged porter, on whose brass badge was engraved a wolf—the badge of Stirling.

“Now then, look alive, you old duffer!” I heard Willie shouting.

“Ou, aye!” replied the other slowly, with a grin on his weather-beaten and saturnine face; “ye think yoursel’ a braw chiel in your mustaches and laced jacket—there was a time when I thocht mysel’ one too.”

“What do you mean?” asked Pitblado, whose dragoon air even his livery failed to conceal.

“Mean!” retorted the other; “why, I mean that at the point o’ the bayonet I helped to carry Badajoz and Ciudad Rodrigo to boot; and now, for sax baubees, I’m thankfu’ to carry your bag. Sae muckle for sodgerin’!”

“It is not very encouraging, certainly,” said my man, with a smile.

“Ten years’ service, two wounds, and a deferred pension of threepence per diem,” growled the other, as he threw my traps, with an oath, on the roof of the carriage.

“What regiment, my friend?” I inquired.



"The old Scots brigade, second battalion, sir," he replied, with a salute, as I slipped a trifle into his hand.

"The weather seems open and fine here."

"Aye," said he, with another saturnine grin; "but a green yule maketh a fat kirk-yard."

In five minutes more we were *en route*, sweeping along the little lonely branch line, that through grassy glens, where the half-frozen runnels oozed or gurgled among withered reeds and bracken bushes, led us into the heart of Fife—"the kingdom," as the Scots call it; not that it ever was so in any time of antiquity, but because the peninsular county contains within its compact and industrious self every means and requisite for the support of its inhabitants, independent of the produce of the whole external world—at least, such is their boast.

I was drawing nearer and nearer home; and now my heart beat high and happily. Every local feature and casual sound, the little thatched cottages, with rusty, antique risps on their doors,\* and the clatter of the

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\* The old Scottish tirling-pin—to be found now nowhere save in Fife—in lieu of bells and knockers.



wooden looms within, were familiar to me. We swept past the quaint town, and the tall, gaunt castle of Clackmannan, where its aged chatelaine—the last of the old Bruce line—*knighted* Robert Burns, with the sword of the victor of Bannockburn, saying, dryly, that she “had a better right to do it than *some people* ;” and ere long I saw the spires that overshadow the graves of Robert I. and many a Scottish monarch, as we glided past Dunfermline, old and grey, with its glorious ruined palace, where Malcolm drank the blood-red wine, and where Charles I. was ‘born, and its steep, quaint streets covering the brow of a sloping ridge that ends abruptly in the wooden glen of Pittencrief.

My delight was fully shared in by Willie Pitblado, my servant, the son of old Simon, my uncle’s keeper. He was a lancer in my troop, for whom I had procured a month’s furlough ; thus the hedgerows where he had bird-nested, the fields where he had sung and whistled at the plough, the farm-gates on which he had swung for hours—a truant boy from school—the woods of Pitrearie and Pittencrief, the abbey’s old grey walls, and the square tower that covers Bruce’s grave, were all hailed by Willie as old friends ; and,



strange to say, his Doric Scotch came back to his tongue with the air he breathed, though it had been nearly well nigh quizzed out of him by our lancers, nearly all of whom were English.

He was a smart, handsome, and soldier-like fellow, who bade fair to be "the rage" among the servant-girls at the old house, the home-farm, and the adjacent village, and a source of vexation to their hobnailed country admirers.

A few miles beyond the old city I quitted the train, and leaving him to follow with my baggage in a dog-cart, I struck across the fields by a near path that I remembered well, and which I knew would bring me straight to Calderwood Glen, the residence of my uncle, Sir Nigel—save Cora, almost the last relation I had now on earth.







## CHAPTER II.

Pure as the silver wreath of snow  
That lies on yonder wintry hill,  
Are all the thoughts that peaceful flow,  
And with pure joy my bosom fill.

Soft as the sweet spring's morning breath,  
Or summer's zephyr, forth they roam ;  
Until my bosom grows more kind,  
And dreams of thee and all at *home*.



HE winter day was cold and clear, but without frost, save on the mountain tops, where the snow was lying. Though vegetation should have been dormant, the swelling uplands, the pastoral hills and braes of Fife, looked green and fertile ; and there was a premature budding of young shoots, which the bitter frost of to-morrow might totally destroy.

Fires glowed redly through the little square windows of the wayside cottages, and from their massive stone chimneys the smoke ascended into the thin air in heavy volumes,



that told of warmth, of comfort, and industry within. Ere long I could see the woods, all bare and leafless, that covered the slopes of Calderwood Glen, and the vanes of the old house shining in the light of the setting sun, which streamed along the green slope of the western Lomond.

I passed unnoticed through the secluded village which stood, I knew, upon the verge of my good uncle's property, and where the old signboards of the smithy, the bakery, and alehouse were familiar to me. The clock of the old Gothic kirk struck the hour of three, slowly and deliberately, as only such clocks do in the country.

Many years ago, in boyhood, I remembered the familiar voice of that village monitor. What changes had taken place since then, in myself and others, and even in the scene around me! How many, whose daily routine, and whose labours—the heritage of toil—were timed by its bell and dial, were now in other lands, or sleeping in their humble graves beneath the shadow of the spire, and yet the old moss-grown clock ticked on!

Since then I had grown to manhood, had seen many of the dearest of my kindred die. Since then I had become a soldier, and had



served in India, and on the staff in the late Burmese war. At the bombardment of Rangoon, I formed one of the storming party which captured the great Dagon Pagoda, and had received a wound in the night attack made by the enemy on our camp at the heights of Prome.

Thousands of stirring scenes and strange faces had flitted before me. I had traversed twice the great Atlantic and Indian oceans, and had twice passed the Cape, on the first occasion looking with anxious eyes and envious heart at every homeward-bound sail; and now all these events seemed as a long dream, and as if it were but yesterday when last I heard the voice of the old village clock.

In that timeworn fane, Row, the Covenanter, had preached; and the great archbishop, too—Sharpe, the recreant, or the martyr (which you will), who died on Magus Muir; and, that the marvellous may not be wanting, there is a legend which tells us that, in the year before the Covenanters invaded England, and stormed Newcastle, thereby seriously injuring the London coal market, there used to issue from the empty loft where, in old Catholic times, the organ stood, the sound of such an instrument in full play, to-



gether with the voices of the choristers singing a grand old Gregorian chant. These sounds were only heard in the night, or at other times, when Calderwood kirk was empty, for the moment any one entered they ceased, and all became still—still as the dead Calderwoods of the Glen and of Piteadie, stretched in effigy, each upon his pedestal of stone, in St. Margaret's aisle ; but this marvel was universally believed to portend the ultimate return of prelacy.

So rapidly and totally does the speed of the railway annihilate alike the extent of time and space, that it seemed difficult to embody the fact that, but four-and-twenty hours ago, I had been in my quarters at Maidstone barracks, or amid the splendour of a fashionable hotel in London ; and yet it was so.

Treading deep among the last year's crisp and withered leaves, I proceeded down the sombre and winding avenue, with a heart that beat quicker as I drew near a man, whose figure I remembered instantly, for he was my early friend, my second father, my maternal uncle, good old Sir Nigel Calderwood. Occupied with a weeder, which he always carried, and with which the ends of all his walking-sticks were furnished, he was intent on up-



rooting some obnoxious weed ; thus I could approach him unobserved. He seemed as stout and hale as when I saw him last. The grey hair, that was wont to escape under his well-worn wide-awake, was thinner and more silvery, perhaps ; but the old hat had its usual row of flies and fishhooks, and his face was ruddy as ever, and spoke of high health and spirits. He stooped a little more, certainly ; but his figure was still sturdy, and clad, as usual, in a rough suit of grey tweed, with his stout legs encased in long brown leather leggings, that had seen much service in their time among the turnips and heather in the shooting season, and in the trouting streams that traverse the fertile Howe of Fife.

An old, half-blind, and wheezing otter terrier crept close to his heels as I came up. With a polite bow the worthy baronet surveyed, but failed to recognise me, and waited, with a glance of inquiry, until I should speak ; for, sooth to say, in the tall, rather well-knit figure, bronzed face, and heavy moustaches I exhibited, he could scarcely be expected to recognise the slender and beardless lad, whose heart was so heavy when he was conveyed away from his mother's arms, to



push his way in the world as a cornet of cavalry some six years before.

"Uncle—Sir Nigel!" said I, in a voice that became tremulous.

"Newton—my dear boy, Newton—am I blind that I did not recognise you?" he exclaimed, while he grasped my hand and threw an arm around me; "welcome back to Calderwood—welcome home—and on the second day of the New Year, too! may many many joyous returns of the season be yours, Newton! What a manly fellow you have become since I saw you last in London—quite a dragoon!"

"And how is Cora—she is with you, of course?"

"Cora is well; and though not a dashing girl, she has grown up an amiable and gentle little pet, who is worth her weight in gold; but you shall see—you shall see, and judge for yourself. The house is full of visitors just now—I have some nice people to present you to."

"Thanks, uncle; but you and Cora were all I cared to see."

"But how came you to be here alone, and on foot too?"

"I left the train at the Calderwood station, and wished to come quietly back to the old house, without any fuss."



"To steal a march upon us, in fact?"

"Yes, uncle, you understand me," said I, looking into his clear dark eyes, which were regarding me with an expression of great affection, which recalled the memory of my mother, his youngest and favourite sister. "Pitblado will drive over with my traps before dinner."

"Ah, Willie, the old keeper's son?"

"Yes."

"And how is he?"

"Quite well, and become so smart a lancer, that I fear there will be a great pulling of caps among the housemaids. I am loth to keep him out of the ranks, but the worthy fellow wont leave me."

"Many a good bag of grouse from yonder fields and the Lomonds, and many a good basket of trout from the Eden, has poor Willie carried for me. But, come this way; we shall take the near cut by the keeper's lodge to the house; you have not forgotten the way?"

"I should think not, uncle; by the Adder's Craig and the old Battle Stone."

"Exactly. I am so glad you have come at this time; I have such news for you, Newton—such news, boy."



"Indeed, uncle?"

"Yes," he continued, laughing heartily.

"How?"

"Calderwood Glen is a mere man-trap at present."

"In what manner?"

"We have here old General Rammerscales, of the Bengal army, who has come home with the liver complaint, and a face as yellow as a buttercup, and his pale niece—a girl worth heaven knows how many sacks or lacs of rupees (though, for the life of me, I never knew what or how much a lac is). We have also Spittal of Lickspittal and that Ilk, M.P. for the Liberal interest (and more particularly for his own), with his two daughters, rather pretty girls; and we have that beautiful blonde, Miss Wilford, who has a cousin in your regiment—a Yorkshire heiress, whom all the men agree would make such a wife! We have also the Countess of Chillingham, and her daughter, Lady Louisa Loftus, really a very charming girl; so, as I told you, Newton, the old house is baited like a regular man-trap for you."

Had my uncle's perception been clearer, or had he been less vigorously using his weeder, as he ran on thus, he could not have failed to



observe how powerfully the last name he uttered affected me.

After a pause—

“In none of your letters,” said I, “did you mention that Lady Loftus was here.”

“Did I not? But Cora is your chief correspondent, and no doubt she did.”

“On the contrary, my cousin never once referred to her.”

“Strange! Lord Chillingham left us a week ago in haste to attend a meeting of the Cabinet; but his womenfolks have been rustivating here for nearly three months. Charming person the countess—charming, indeed; but the daughter is quite a Diana. You have met her before—she told us so, and I have made up my mind—ah, you know for what, you rogue—eh?”

What my uncle had made up his mind for was not very apparent; but he concluded his sentence by poking the weeder under my short ribs.

“To have me marry in haste and repent at leisure, eh, uncle—is it for this that your mind is made up?”

“I am a man of the old school, Newton; yet I hate proverbs, and everything old, except wine and good breeding.”



"You are aware, uncle," said I, to change the subject, "that the lancers are under orders for Turkey?"

"Where women are kept under lock and key, bought, and secluded from society; just as in Britain they are thrust into it for sale."

"And so, my dear uncle, supposing that a lively young lancer will make a most excellent husband for your noble and beautiful *protégée*, you are resolved to make a victim of me, is it not so?"

"Precisely; but according to the old use and wont in drama and romance, you must not be a willing one; you must be prepared to hate her cordially at first sight, and to prefer some one else—of course, some amiable village damsel, of humble but respectable parentage," replied Sir Nigel, laughing.

"Hate *her*—prefer another!" I exclaimed; "on the contrary, I—I——"

I know not what I was about to say, or how far I might have betrayed myself. The blood rushed to my temples, and I felt giddy and confused, for the kind old baronet knew little of the hopeless passion with which the fair one of whom he spoke had inspired me already.



"You have met the Lady Louisa before, you say?"

"Nay, 'twas she who said she had met me," said I, glad to recall by this trifling remark that I was not forgotten by her.

"Ah, indeed—indeed; where?"

"Oh, at Canterbury, at Tunbridge, Bath; all those places where people are to be met. In London, too, I saw her presented at Court."

"The deuce! You and she seem to have gone in a leash," said Sir Nigel, laughing, while the colour deepened on my cheek again; "but you must look sharp, for one of your fellows who is here is for ever dangling after her."

"One of *ours*?" I exclaimed, with astonishment.

"Yes; a solemn, dreary, dandified fellow, whom I met at Chillingham's shootings in the north, and invited to spend the last weeks of his leave of absence here, as we were to have you with us; and he spared no pains to impress upon me that he was a particular chum of yours."

"Is he Captain Travers—Vaughan Travers? He is on leave."

"No; he is Lieutenant De Warr Berkeley."

"Berkeley!" I repeated, with some disgust,



and with an emotion of such inconceivable annoyance that I could scarcely conceal it ; for decidedly he was the last man of ours whom I should have liked to find domesticated at Calderwood Glen.

Berkeley was well enough to meet with in men's society, at mess, on parade, on the turf, or in the hunting-field ; but though handsome and perfectly well-bred, for his manners were generally unexceptionable, he was not a man for the drawing-room. He was master of a splendid fortune, which was left him by his father, a plain old Scotchman, who had begun life as a drayman, and whose patronymic was simply John Dewar Barclay. He became a wealthy brewer, and somehow his son, like all such *parvenus*, despising the line, was gazetted to the lancers as De Warr Berkeley, and as such his name figured in the "Army List."

The carefully-acquired fortune of the plodding old brewer he spent freely, and without being lavish, though as an Eton boy, and afterwards as a gentleman commoner of Christchurch, he had plunged into dissipation that made his name proverbial. He was one of those systematic *roués* whom prudent mothers would carefully exclude from the society of their daughters, nathless his commission, his



cavalry uniform, his fortune, his decidedly handsome person and bearing, which had all the "tone of society"—whatever that may mean.

Hence I was rather provoked to find that the kind and well-meaning but blundering old baronet had, as a favour to me, installed him at Calderwood, as a friend for my pretty cousin Cora, and an admirer of Lady Louisa. As I thought over all this, her name must have escaped me, for my uncle roused me from a reverie by saying—

"Yes; she is a charming, a splendid girl, really! A little too stately, perhaps; but I would rather have my little rosebud, Cora, with her peculiar winning ways. Lady Louisa may be all head—as I believe she is; but our Cora is all heart, Newton—all heart!"

"And Lady Louisa is all head, you think, uncle?"

"I could see that at a glance—yes, with half an eye; and yet there are times when I wish Cora had been a boy——"

My uncle leaned on his stick, and sighed.

His eldest son had been killed in the 12th Lancers, at the battle of Goojerat; the other had died prematurely at college—a double loss, which had a most fatal effect on their delicate



mother, then in the last stage of a mortal disease. Now the affection of the lonely Sir Nigel was centred in Cora, his only daughter, the child of his declining years ; and thus he had a great regard for me as the son of his youngest sister ; but he sorrowed in secret that his baronetcy—one of the oldest in Scotland, having been created in 1625 by Charles I.—should pass out of his family.

Sir Norman Calderwood of the Glen, who had attended the Scottish princess, Elizabeth Stuart, to Bohemia, was the first patented among the baronets of Nova Scotia ; and was therefore styled *Primus Baronettorum Scotiæ*, a prefix of which my uncle, as his ancestors had been, was not a little vain.

“The estates are entailed,” said he, pursuing this line of thought ; “they were among the first that were so, when the Scottish parliament passed the Entail Act in 1685 ; and though they go, as you know, to a remote collateral branch, the baronetcy ends with myself. Cora shall be well and handsomely left ; for she shall have the Pitgavel property, which, with its coal and iron mines, yields two thousand per annum clear. And you, my boy, Newton, shall find that, tide what may, you are not forgotten.”



"Uncle, you have already done so much for me——"

"Much, Newton?"

"Yes, my dear sir."

"Stuff! fitted you out for the lancers—that is all."

"You have done more than that, uncle——"

"I have lodged the purchase money for your troop with Messrs. Cox and Co. ; but most of this money must, under other circumstances, have been spent on your cousins, had they lived. So, thank fate and the fortune of war, not me, boy, not me. But there are times, especially when I am alone, that it grieves me to think, that instead of leaving an heir to the old title, one boy lies in his grave in the old kirk yonder ; and the other, far far away on the battle-field of Goojerat."

He shook his white head, and his voice became tremulous, his chin sank on his breast, and he added—

"My poor Nigel!—my bonnie Archie!"

The baronet was a handsome man, above six feet in height ; and though he stooped a little now, had been erect as a pike. He possessed fine aquiline features, a ruddy and healthy complexion ; clear, and bright dark grey eyes ; a well-shaped, though not very



small, mouth ; and a Scottish chin, of a curve that evinced perseverance and decision. His hair was nearly white, but there was plenty of it ; his hands, though browned by exposure and seldom gloved—for the gun, the rod, the riding-whip, and the curling stone were ever in them by turns—were well shaped, and showed by their form and nails that he was a gentleman of good blood and breeding. His plain costume I have described, and he was without ornament, save a silver dog-whistle at his button-hole, and a large gold signet-ring, which belonged to his grandfather, Sir Alexander Calderwood, who commanded a frigate under Admiral Hawke, in the fleet which, in 1748, fought and vanquished the Spanish galleons between Tortuga and the Havannah.

A sturdy old Fifeshire laird, proud of a long line of warlike Scottish ancestors, uncrossed by any taint of foreign blood, he was fond of boasting that neither Dane nor Norman—the Englishman's strange vaunt and pride—could be found among them ; but that he came of a race, which—as our Highlanders forcibly phrase it—had sprung from the soil, and were indigenous to it.

But, indeed, the alleged foreign descent of nearly the whole Scottish aristocracy is a silly



sham, existing in their own imagination, having arisen from the ignorance of the monkish Latin writers, who in rolls and histories prefixed the Norman *de* or *le*, in many instances, to the most common Celtic patronymics and surnames.

Sir Nigel had "paraded," to use a barrack phrase, more than one man in his youth, and enjoyed the reputation of being an unpleasantly good shot with his pistol. He could remember sharing in the rage of the high-flying Tory party among the Fife lairds, when Sir Alexander Boswell, of Auchinleck, was shot by James Stuart, of Dunearn, in a solemn duel, where personal and political rancour were combined, at Balmuto, for which the victor had to fly to England, and from thence to France.

"It seemed strange on reflection, Newton," I have frequently heard Sir Nigel say, "that poor Boswell was the first to propose in Parliament the repeal of our old Scottish statutes anent duelling, and that, after all, he should fall by the pistol for a mere newspaper squib, in which Sir Walter Scott was, perhaps, as much to blame as he."





### CHAPTER III.

Sing on, thou sweet mavis, thy song to the ev'ning,  
Thou'rt dear to the echoes of Calderwood Glen;  
Sae dear to this bosom, sae artless and winning,  
Is charming young Jessie, the flower o' Dunblane,  
TANNAHILL.

**H**ERE is the old house, and here we are at last, Newton," said my uncle, as an abrupt turn of the private path through the woodlands brought us suddenly in front of the ancient mansion, in which, after the early death of my father, I had spend my boyhood.

It stands in a well-wooded hollow, or glen, overlooked by the three Lomonds of Fife—a county which, though not renowned for its picturesque scenery, can show us many peaceful and beautiful landscapes.

Calderwood is simply an old manor-house, or fortalice, like some thousand others in Scotland, having a species of keep, with adjacent



buildings, erected during quieter or more recent periods of Scottish history than the first dwelling, which had suffered severely during the wars between Mary of Guise and the Lords of the Congregation, when the soldiers of Desse d'Epainvilliers blew up a portion of it by gunpowder—an act terribly revenged by Sir John Calderwood of the Glen, who had been chamberlain of Fife and captain of the castle of St. Andrew's for Cardinal Beaton. Overtaking a party of the *Bandes Françaises* in Falkland Woods, he routed them with considerable slaughter, and hung at least a dozen of them on the oak trees in the park of the palace.

The latest additions had been made under the eye of Sir William Bruce of Kinross, the architect of Holyrood—the Scottish Inigo Jones—about a hundred and ninety years before the present period, and thus were somewhat florid and Palladian in their style, their fluted pilasters and Roman cornices and capitals contrasting singularly with the grim severity and strongly-grated windows of the old tower, which was founded on a mass of grey rock, round which a terraced garden lies.

Within this, the older portion, the rooms



were strange and quaint in aspect, with arched roofs, wainscoted walls, and yawning fireplaces, damp, dusty, cold, and forlorn, where the atmosphere felt as if the dead Calderwoods of other times visited them, and lingered there apart from the fashionable friends of their descendants in the more modern mansion; and within the tower Sir Nigel treasured many old relics of the palace of Dunfermline, which, when its roof fell in, in 1708, was literally plundered by the people.

Thus, in one room, he had the cradle of James VI., and the bed in which his son, Charles I., had been born; in another, a cabinet of Anne of Denmark, a chair of Robert III., and a sword of the Regent Albany.

The demesne (Scotice, "policy") around this picturesque old house was amply studded with glorious old timber, under which browsed herds of deer, of a size, strength, and ferocity unknown in England. The stately entrance-gate, bearing the palm tree of the Calderwoods, a crusading emblem; the long avenue, of two Scottish miles, and the half-castellated mansion which terminated its leafy vista, well befitted the residence of one whose fathers had ridden forth to uphold Mary's banner at



Langside, and that of James VIII. at the battle of Dunblane.

Here was the well where the huntsman and soldier, James V., had slaked his thirst in the forest; and there was the oak under which his father—he who fell at Flodden—shot the monarch of the herd by a single bolt from his crossbow.

In short, Calderwood, with all its memories, was a complete epitome of the past.

The Eastern Lomond (so called, like its brothers, from Laomain, a Celtic hero), now reddened by the setting sun, seemed beautiful, with the green verdure that at all seasons covers it to the summit, as we approached the house.

Ascending to the richly-carved entrance-door, where one, whilom of oak and iron, had given place to another of plate-glass, a footman, powdered, precise, liveried, and aiguilletted, with the usual amplitude of calf and acute facial angle of his remarkable fraternity, appeared; but ere he could touch the handle it was flung open, and a handsome young girl, with a blooming complexion, sparkling eyes, and a bright and joyous smile, rushed down the steps to meet us.

“Welcome to Calderwood, Newton,” she



exclaimed ; " may our new year be a happy one ! "

" Many happy ones be yours, Cora," said I, kissing her cheek. " Though I am changed since we last met, your eyes have proved clearer than those of uncle, for, really, he did not know me."

" Oh, papa, was it so ? " she asked, while her fine eyes swam with fun and pleasure.

" A fact, my dear girl."

" Ah ! I could never be so dull, though you have those new dragoon appendages," said she, laughingly, as I drew her arm through mine, and we passed into a long and stately corridor, furnished with cabinets, busts, paintings, and suits of mail, towards the drawing-room ; " and I am not married yet, Newton," she added with another bright smile.

" But there must be some favoured man, eh, Cora ? "

" No," said she, with a tinge of *hauteur* over her playfulness, " none."

" Time enough to think of marrying, Cora ; why, you are only nineteen, and I hope to dance at your wedding when I return from Turkey."

" Turkey," she repeated, while a cloud came over her pure and happy face ; " oh,



don't talk of that, Newton; I had forgotten it?"

"Yes; does it seem a long, or a doubtful time to look forward to?"

"It seems both, Newton."

"Well, cousin, with those soft violet eyes of yours, and those black, shining braids (the tempting mistletoe is just over your head), and with loves of bonnets, well-fitting gloves and kid boots, dresses ever new and of every hue, you cannot fail to conquer, whenever you please."

She gave me a full, keen glance, that seemed expressive of annoyance, and said, with a little sigh—

"You don't understand me, Newton. We have been so long separated that I think you have forgotten all the peculiarities of my character now."

"What the deuce can she mean?" thought I.

My cousin Cora was in her fullest bloom. She was pretty, remarkably pretty, rather than beautiful; and by some women she was quite eclipsed, even when her cheek flushed, and her eyes, a deep violet grey, were most lighted up.

She was fully of the middle height, and finely rounded, with exquisite shoulders, arms,



and hands. Her features were small, and perhaps not quite regular. Her eyes were alternately timid, inquiring, and full of animation; but, in fact, their expression was ever varying. Her hair was black, thick, and wavy; and while I looked upon her, and thought of her present charms and of past times—and more than all of my old uncle's fatherly regard for me—I felt that, though very fond of her, but for another I might have loved her more dearly and tenderly. And now, as if to interrupt, or rather to confirm the tenor of such thoughts as these, she said, as a lady suddenly approached the door of the drawing room, which we were about to enter—

“Here is one, a friend, to whom I must introduce you.”

“No introduction is necessary,” said the other, presenting her hand. “I have had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Norcliff before.”

“Lady Louisa!” I exclaimed, in a breathless voice, and a heart that trembled with sudden emotion, as I touched her hand.

“I am so glad you have come before we leave. I shall have so much to ask you about our mutual friends—who are engaged, and who have quarrelled; who have come home, and who gone abroad. We have been no less



than four months in Scotland. Meantime," she added, glancing at her tiny watch, "we must dress for dinner. Come, Cora; we have barely half an hour, and old General Rammerscales is so impatient—he studies military time, and with a military appetite, as old Mr. Potter calls it."

And with a bow and smile of great brightness and sweetness she passed on, taking with her Cora, who playfully kissed her hand to me as they glided up the great staircase into which the long corridor opened.

Lady Louisa was taller and larger in person than Cora. Her features were singularly beautiful, and clearly cut; her forehead was low; and her nose had the gentlest approach to the aquiline. She was without colour, her complexion being pale, perhaps creamy; while in strange contrast to this aristocratic pallor or delicacy, her thick, wavy hair, her long double eyelashes, and her ever-sparkling eyes, were black as those of a Spanish gitano or a Welsh gipsy.

To this pale loveliness was added a bearing alternately haughty and playful, but at all times completely self-possessed; an exquisite taste in dress and jewellery; a very alluring voice; a power of investing even trifles with



interest, and of conversing fluently and gracefully on any subject—whether she was mistress of it or not mattered little to Lady Louisa.

She was about my own age, perhaps a few months younger; but in experience of the fashionable world, and in knowledge of the manners and ideas of the upper ten thousand, she was a hundred years my senior.

Suffice it to say that I had lost my heart to her—that I thought she knew it well, but feared, or disdained to acknowledge, a triumph so small as the conquest of a lieutenant of lancers among the many others she had won. So thought I, in the angry humility and jealous bitterness of my heart.

For a minute I felt as one in a dream. I was sensible that my uncle had said something about changing his costume, and, suggesting some change in mine, had apologized, and left me to linger in the corridor, or in the drawing-room, as I chose; but now a personage, who had been lounging on a *fauteuil* in the latter, intent on a volume of *Punch*, and the soles of whose glazed boots had been towards me, suddenly rose and approached, in full evening costume.



He proved to be no other than Berkeley of ours, who had been in the room alone, or, at least, alone with Lady Louisa Loftus. He came slowly forward, with his sauntering air, as if the exertion of walking was a bore, and with his eyeglass retained in its place by a muscular contraction of the right eyebrow. His whole air had the "used-up" bearing of those miserable Dundrearys who affect to act as if youth, wealth, and luxury were the greatest calamities that flesh is heir to, and that life itself was a bore.

"Ah, Norcliff—haw—glad to see you here, old fellow. Haw—heard you were coming. How goes it with you, and how are all at Maidstone?"

"Preparing for foreign service," said I, curtly, as the tip of his gloved hand touched mine.

"Horrid bore! Too late to send in one's papers now, or, by Jove, I'd hook the service. Don't think I was ever meant for it."

"Ere long many more will be of your way of thinking," said I, coolly.

Berkeley had a cold and cunning eye, which never smiled, whatever his mouth might do. His face was, nevertheless, decidedly handsome, and a thick, dark moustache concealed



a form of lip which, if seen, would have indicated a thorough sensualist. His head was well shaped ; but the accurate division of his well-oiled hair over the centre of the caput gave him an air of intense insipidity. Mr. De Warr Berkeley never was a favourite of mine, though we had both joined the lancers on the same day, and it was with very ill-concealed annoyance I found myself compelled, with some apparent cordiality, to greet him as a brother officer and an inmate of my uncle's mansion.

"And—haw—what news from the regiment?" he resumed.

"I really have no news, Berkeley," said I.

"Indeed. You have got a month's leave?"

"Between returns, yes."

"Is the route come?"

"A strange question, when you and I are here."

"Haw—yes, of course—how devilish good."

"It has *not*," said I, coldly ; "but we are under orders for foreign service, and may look to have our leaves cancelled by a telegram any day or hour."

"The devil—really!"

"Fact, though, however unpleasant it may



be. So my uncle, Sir Nigel, met you at—where was it?”

“Chillingham’s shooting-box, in the Highlands.”

“I was not aware that you knew the earl.”

“Losing my gillies—I think you call them in Scotland—one evening in the dark, I lost my way, and luckily stumbled on his lordship’s shooting quarters, in a wild and savage place, with one of your infernally unpronounceable Scotch names.”

“Oh, you think changes more euphonious at times; but I suppose your father, honest man, could have pronounced it with ease,” said I, quietly, for Berkeley’s, or Barclay’s affectation of being an Englishman was to me always a source of amusement. “You have to learn Russ yet, and it will prove, doubtless, more unpalatable than the tongue your father spoke. In the north, did you appear *en montagnard*?”

“Hey—haw, the devil! no; as the Irish Gil Blas says, ‘Every one’s legs can’t afford publicity,’ and mine are among the number. Leather breeches, when I don the pink, must be all the length. I don’t care about going, though Lady Louisa pressed me hard to join the Mac Quaig, the Laird of Mac Gooligan,



and other natives in tartan at a gathering. I had a letter from Wilford yesterday. He writes of a famous match between Jack Studhome and Craven, on which the whole mess had a heavy book, that great stakes were pending, and that Craven won, scoring forty-two running off the red ball ; and considering that the pockets of the table were not bigger than an egg-cup, I think Craven a trump."

"I heard something of this match at morning parade on the day I left ; but being a bad stroke, you know, I seldom play billiards."

"Why was Howard's bay mare scratched at the last regimental race?"


"Don't know," said I, so drily that he bit his nether lip.

"Some nice people visiting here," said he, staring at me steadily, so that his eyeglass glared in the light of the lustre, which was now lit ; "and some very odd ones too. Lady Loftus is here, you see, in all her glory, and with her usual come-kiss-me-if-you-dare kind of look."

"Berkeley, how can you speak thus of one in her position?"

"Well, you-don't-dare-to-do-so-again sort of expression."

"She is my uncle's guest ; not a girl in a





cigar-shop or a casino !" said I, with growing *hauteur*.

"Sir Nigel's guest—haw—so am I, and I mean to make the best use of my time as such. Nice girl, Miss Wilford, from York—cousin of Wilford of ours—a doocid good style of girl ; but have no intentions in that quarter—can't afford to chuck myself away, as I once heard my groom observe."

"You must learn to quote another style of people to make yourself understood here. You don't mean to infer that you have any intentions concerning Lady Louisa ?" said I, with an air which was really impertinent.

"Why not ?" he asked, failing completely to see it. "I have often such attacks, or affections of the heart, as she has given me."

"How ?"

"Just as I had the measles or the chicken-pox in childhood—a little increase of the pulse, a little restlessness at night, and then one gets over it."

"Take care how you address her in this bantering fashion," said I, turning sharply away ; "excuse me, but now I must dress for dinner."

And preceded by old Mr. Binns, the white-headed old butler, who many a time in days



of yore had carried me on his back, and who now welcomed me home with a hearty shake of the hand, in which there was nothing derogatory to me, though Berkeley's eyes opened very wide when he saw our greeting, I was conducted to my old room in the north wing, where a cheerful fire was blazing, with two lights on each side of the toilette-table (the manor-house was amply lit with gas from the village), and there was Willie Pitblado arranging all my traps and clothes. But dismissing him to visit his family (to his no small joy), I was left to my own reflections, and proceeded to dress.

A subtle and subdued tone of insolence and jealousy that pervaded the few remarks made by Berkeley irritated and chafed me ; yet he had said nothing with which I could grapple, or with which I could openly find fault. I was conscious, too, that my own bearing had been the reverse of courteous and friendly, and that, if I showed my hand thus, I might as well give up the cards.

Suspicion of his native character, and a foreknowledge of the man, had doubtless much to do with all this ; and while making my toilet with more than my usual care—conscious that Lady Louisa was making hers in the next



room—I resolved to keep a lynx-like eye upon Mr. De Warr Berkeley during our short sojourn at Calderwood Glen.

My irritation was no way soothed, or my pique lessened, by the information that for some time past, and quite unknown to me, he had been residing here with Lady Louisa, enjoying all the facilities afforded by hourly propinquity and the seclusion of a country house.

Had he already declared himself? Had he already proposed? The deuce! I thrust aside the thought, and angrily gave my hair a finishing rasp with a pair of huge ivory-handled hair-brushes.







## CHAPTER IV.

And, oh ! the memories that cling  
Around this old oak-panelled room !  
The pine logs flashing through the gloom,  
Sun sparkles from life's early spring.

After long years I rest again ;  
This ancient home it seems to me,  
Wearied with travel o'er the sea,  
Holds anodyne for carking pain.



S I surveyed my old apartment  
the memories of other years  
stole over me with somewhat  
of a soothing influence, for  
when I thought of the past,  
the littleness of the present, the evanescent  
nature of all things could not fail to impress  
me.

It was in that room I had the last vivid  
recollection of my dear mother's face, on that  
farewell morning, when with early dawn she  
stole in on tiptoe, to look for the last time  
upon her boy as he slept, and before he went  
forth into the world beyond her maternal care  
for ever.



The thunder of a gong in the corridor cut short further reflections, recalling me to the present ; and giving a finishing touch to my costume, which was not the blue lancer uniform, faced with white, and laced with gold, but the solemn funereal suit and white necktie of civil life—a horrid costume that has crept among us, heaven knows how—I descended to the outer drawing-room, where I found my uncle and cousin marshalling their guests, of whom there appeared to be a goodly number.

Berkeley had already monopolized Lady Louisa, with whom he was conversing in a low tone, while busy stroking his moustaches, which were darkened by the “ Guards’ dye,” and the pointing and twirling of which afforded him endless employment.

There was no denying that the fellow looked well ; and that the result of riding, drilling, dancing, and fencing, had been to impart to him much of that unmistakable air which, I may say without vanity, belongs particularly to the officers of our branch of the service.

The odd minutes which precede dinner are seldom very lively, and rather depress than raise the spirits. To Cora I was a species of “ lion ;” and as such underwent, through



her, a process of introduction to several people I cared not a jot about, and never would.

I discussed the weather with General Rammerscales, as if I kept a rain-gauge and barometer, and was own brother to Admiral Fitzroy; touched on politics with the M.P., and on clerical innovations with a divine; kissed Cora's hand in play, and drew near to Lady Louisa, nearer still to her awful mother, whom I felt the necessity of conciliating to the utmost. Every one talked in a monotone, except jovial Sir Nigel, who was always cheery, brisk and bustling about from guest to guest.

With the Countess of Chillingham (who accorded me a calm but courteous bow), my uncle, whose costume was a suit of accurate black, led the way past Binns and a line of liveried and powdered gentlemen drawn up in the corridor.

She was a stately woman, of ample proportions, with a diamond tiara glittering on her grey hair.

Her face was fine in feature, and very noble in expression, showing that in youth she must have been beautiful.

Her costume was magnificent, being maroon-coloured velvet over white satin, trimmed with the richest lace. I rather dreaded her.



She had all the peerage—"the Englishman's second bible"—committed to memory ; and, through the pages of Burke and Debrett, knew all the available and suitable heirs presumptive by rote—their ages, rank, title, and order of precedence ; for it was among the strawberry leaves she chiefly expected to find a husband for her daughter—a marquis at least ; and as she swept out of the room, with a velvet train like a coronation robe, she cast a backward glance to see to whose care that fair lady was confided.

Seeing Berkeley paired off with Miss Wilford, I hastened towards Lady Louisa. With her I was sufficiently intimate to have offered my arm.

As I have stated, we had met frequently before, at Canterbury, Bath, and elsewhere. Her society had been to me a source of greater pleasure and excitement than that of any other woman in whose way chance had thrown me.

Her rank, as the daughter of an earl, and her rare beauty, had dazzled me, while her coquetry had piqued my vanity ; though I imagined that, without discovering the deep interest she excited in my heart, I had taught her to view me as an object of more interest than other men.



I approached, and she received me calmly, placidly, with a bright but conventional smile, from which I could augur or gather nothing.

In her there was none of the clamorous tremor which I felt in my own breast, where something of annoyance at the coldness of her mother's bow was rankling.

"Lady Louisa—permit me," said I, proffering my arm.

"Too late, Mr. Norcliff. I am already engaged," she replied, rising, and placing her pretty gloved hand on the arm of old General Rammerscales, who, bowing and smiling with gratified vanity, remarked to me in passing—

"Been to India, I presume?"

"Yes, general, and Rangoon, too."

"Bah! 'tisn't what it used to be in my time—the Indian service is going to the deuce."

"But I belong to the lancers."

"Ah!"

A daughter of the liberal M.P. Spittal, of Lickspittal, fell to my lot—a pretty piece of muslin and insipidity; but luckily we were seated not far from Lady Loftus. Near us were Miss Wilford and Berkeley, who proved less inattentive than I during the dinner, which proceeded with more joviality and



laughter than is usual in such society ; but the guests, twenty-four in number, were somewhat varied, for on this occasion the minister, doctor, and lawyer of the parish, the provost of a neighbouring burgh, and other persons out of the baronet's circle, were present.

In that old Scottish château, the mode of life was deprived of all ostentation, though luxurious and even fashionable.

The great oak table in the dining-room was covered with plenty, and with every delicacy of the season ; but in its details it partook more of the baronial hall than such apartments usually do.

It was floored with encaustic tiles, amid the pattern of which the arms of the Calderwoods were reproduced again and again ; and at each end sparkled and glowed a great fire of coals from the baronet's own pits, with the smouldering remains of a great yule log that had grown in his own woods, and had been perhaps a green sapling when James V. kept court in Falkland.

In the centre of this dining-hall lay a soft Turkey carpet for the feet of those who were seated at table.

The chairs were all square backed, well cushioned with green velvet, and dated from



the time of James VII.; the walls were of dark varnished wainscot, decorated with old portraits and stags' antlers; for there was here a curious blending of old baronial state with the comforts and tastes of modern times and modern luxury.

Above each of the great fireplaces, carved in stone, were the arms of the Calderwoods of Calderwood and Piteadie; *argent* a palm tree growing out of a mount in base, surmounted by a saltire *gules*; on a chief *azure*, three mullets, the crest being a hand bearing a palm branch, with the motto, "*Veritas premitur non apprimitur.*"

Amid the buzz of tongues around me—for, sooth to say, some of my uncle's country guests made noise enough—I looked from time to time beyond the great epergne to where Lady Louisa sat, evidently bored and amused by turns with the laboured conversation of the old sepoy general.

It was impossible to refrain from turning again and again to admire that pale and creamy complexion, those deep black eyes and eyelashes, the small rosy mouth, the thick dark hair that grew in a downward peak, the lovely little ears with their diamond pendants, those hands and arms, which were



perfection in colour, delicacy, and symmetry.

Twice her eyes met mine, giving me each time a bright glance of intelligence, and making my heart beat happily.

I fear that the young lady by whose side I was seated must have found me anything but a satisfactory companion, and her simple remarks concerning the coming war, our chances of going abroad, the latest novelty in music or literature—Bulwer, Dickens, Thackeray, and so forth—fell on a dull or inattentive ear.

The dinner passed away as others do ; the dessert was discussed. The fruit came, and now, as this was but the second eve of the new year, the old family wassail-bowl was placed before my uncle. Thanks to railway speed, I was enabled to partake of this old-fashioned libation. The great silver vessel in which it was compounded was the pride of Sir Nigel's heart, having been taken by an ancestor at the storming of Newcastle by the Scots in 1640, when the "Fife regiment entered by the great breach in the fore wall." It had four handles of chased silver, each representing a long, lanky hound, with his hind feet on the bulb of the



cup, and his nose and fore paws on the upper rim.

It held four bottles of port, which were spiced with cloves, nutmeg, mace, and ginger ; the whites of six eggs well whisked and sugared ; and six roasted apples were swimming on the top.

To prepare this potent draught was the yearly task of old Mr. Binns, the butler, and my cousin Cora. Sir Nigel rose, and filling his glass from the gigantic tankard, exclaimed, ere he drained it—

“A happy new year to you all, my friends ! May the year that is gone be the worst of our lives, and may the new one, that opens full of promise, give joy to all !”

“A happy new year to all, Sir Nigel,” went round the table, as we emptied our glasses ; and as Binns replenished them from the wassail-bowl, the conversation became more free and unrestrained, for the celebration of the new year is a festival that has not yet fallen into desuetude in Scotland, though it has nearly done so in the sister kingdom.

Wherever Scotsmen go, they never forget the associations or the customs of their fatherland ; thus, in England and Ireland, and still



more amid the goldfields of Australia, or the rice-swamps of Hong Kong, in the cities, camps, and barracks of India and America—ay, and in our ships far out upon the lonely sea, ten thousand miles, perhaps, from Forth, or Tay, or Clyde, on New Year's morning there are claspings of toil-hardened hands, good wishes exchanged, with thoughts of home, its familiar faces, and its old fireside ; the heather hills, and the deep grassy glens, that some may never see more ; but still, amid joy and revelry, and, perhaps, the songs of Burns, the new year is ushered in.

On that morning, as soon as the clocks strike twelve, a cheer passes over all the towns and hamlets of Scotland, from the German to the Atlantic sea ; many a bottle is broached, and many a bagpipe blown ; and though the wild orgies and uproar, and sometimes the discharge of firearms, with which it used to be welcomed at every market-cross, are passing away, still the New Year's tide is a time of feasting, merry-making, and congratulations with all.

Even that solemn "Dundreary," my brother officer, Berkeley, thawed under the jovial influence of the society around him ; but I was provoked to find that it led simply to



very animated conversation between himself and Lady Louisa across the table.

It referred to a past hunting affair, in which they had had some adventures together.

"We—haw—had not been there more than half an hour before there was a find," said he; "you remember, Lady Louisa?"

"How could I forget?" she responded, with charming animation. "The fox, a dull, reddish fawn one, with black back and shoulders, broke cover from among some gorse at the foot of the Mid Lomond."

"The hounds were instantly in full cry, and away we went. By Jove, it was beautiful! We cleared some garden-walls, where we left the general up to the chin in somebody's hothouse; and after that we took the lead of the entire field."

"We?" said I, inquiringly.

"Lady Louisa and myself," replied Berkeley, with one of his quiet, deep smiles; "we were better mounted, and in riding I—haw—flatter myself that few—few even of your Fifeshire hunt will surpass me."

"Well?" I said, impatiently, crushing a walnut to pieces.

"The meet was at the base of the Mid



Lomond ; the morning was everything that could be desired ; the field was very small, but select ; Sir Nigel, the general, Mr. Spittal, Lady Louisa, Miss Calderwood, Miss Wilford, and—haw—a few others. The pack was in a most workman-like condition, and, as Lady Louisa remembers, they soon proclaimed a find, with open mouth.”

“ Yes,” said she, with her dark eyes lighting up ; “ away we went at racing speed, through the park of Falkland, a two miles open run at least, on, on, over ‘ bank, bush, and scaur——’ ”

“ But the fox was evidently an old one. He tried some old coal mines, and then some field drains ; but they had been carefully stopped by old Pitblado, the keeper. Yet we lost him at a deep pool on the banks of the Eden.”

“ But for a time only, Mr. Berkeley,” resumed Lady Louisa. “ You remember how oddly he was found in a cabbage-garden, and how we cleared the hedges at a flying leap, you and I going neck and neck ; you must remember, too, how Sir Nigel’s shout made all our hearts rebound ! ”

“ Quitting the river-side, he broke southward for two fields, and ran straight through



the home farm of Calderwood ; on, on we rode, and drove him right in Kinross-shire ; but doubling on the dogs, he led us back. Doubling again, we pursued him once more into Kinross ; what did you think of that, general ?”

“Left to my own reflections among the melon-beds, ten miles in your rear, I thought it devilish poor work when compared to tiger-hunting,” growled the general.

“In and out of each county he went no less than three times in as many half-hours,” said Lady Louisa ; “and but for the darkness of the December evening, he would have been compelled to yield up his brush, had we not lost him in a thicket near Kinies Wood, at Loch Leven side.”

“We lost more,” said Miss Wilford, with a very decided expression of mischief in her very beautiful blue eyes ; “for when the whole hunt assembled, Lady Louisa and Mr. Berkeley were nowhere to be found—the keepers shouted, and horns were blown in vain. Having taken the wrong road, they did not reach the Glen till half-past nine, when a storm of snow was falling.”

“Which compelled us, Miss Wilford, to take shelter in wayside cottages at Balgedie and at Orphil,” said Lady Louisa, with a tone



of real annoyance, while her eye, like a gleam of light, dwelt for an instant on me ; but the hunting anecdote and its conclusion piqued—cut me to the heart.

With such opportunities could Berkeley have failed to press his suit ?

I glanced at him. His temporary animation had subsided ; his pale and impassive face wore its usual quiet and cold expression ; yet his eyes were keen, restless, and watchful, even cunning at times. He smiled seldom, and laughed—so to say—never.

Whether it was simply the memory of that winter day's sport, with all its excitement and concomitant danger, in counties so rough and hilly as Fife and Kinross, or whether it was some particular incident connected therewith that inspired her, I know not ; but a flush on the usually pale cheek of Louisa Loftus made her look radiantly beautiful—like a dash of rouge, lending a glorious lustre to her deeply-lashed dark eyes. But now my Lady Chillingham, who evidently did not share her daughter's enthusiasm for field sports, exchanged an expressive glance with Cora, who, of course, occupied the head of the table, with the parish minister in the post of honour at her right hand.



Then we all rose like a covey of partridges, while the ladies retired in single file to the drawing-room, whither I longed to accompany them; but now the gentlemen drew their chairs closer together, side by side; Sir Nigel announced that "the business of the evening was only beginning;" the wine decanters and the claret jugs were replenished; Binns appeared with water steaming hot in an antique silver kettle, followed by a servant bearing liqueur-frames, filled with "mountain dew," for those who preferred toddy, the national beverage, to which fully half the company, including my jolly old kinsman, at once betook themselves.

Somehow those "trifles light as air," which are the torments of the jealous and the doubtful, were added to fears, to crush me now.

Even without the danger of a rival, I knew that "*La Mère Chillingham*," as the mess called her, would keep a sharp eye upon me, as the possessor only of my subaltern's commission in the lancers, with a couple of hundred or so per annum; for she believed that all men so circumstanced were little better than well-accredited sharpers, and, as such, certain to have nefarious designs upon her wealthy and



beautiful daughter—designs which our plumes, epaulettes, and lancer trappings were every way calculated to render more dangerous.

I felt sure that, by such as she, even the wealthy parvenu, De Warr Berkeley, would be less dreaded than I; and as I looked round the old hall of Calderwood, and saw the grim portraits of those who had preceded me, looking disdainfully out of their stiff ruffs and long doublets, and thought of my rival's puerile character, and his father's beer vats, an emotion of real contempt for the cold-blooded and match-making countess stole into my heart.

Louisa Loftus was, indeed, a proud and glorious beauty. I knew not yet what were my chances of success with her, and, in short, I "had nothing for it but to wait and try my best to be sanguine."

The brave old axiom, "that no fortress is impregnable," is a valuable worldly lesson, and one ought never to forget that a storming party rarely fails.

There was some consolation in this reflection.

I took another glass of sparkling hock, another, and another, and somehow through their medium the world began to look more bright and cheering.





## CHAPTER V.

Come, let us enjoy the fleeting day,  
And banish toil, and laugh at care,  
For who would grief and sorrow bear  
When he can throw his griefs away?  
Away, away!—begone, I say!  
For mournful thought  
Will come unsought.

BOWRING'S "POETRY OF SPAIN."



PROVOST," said my uncle to the jovial and rubicund magistrate who sat on his left hand, now that he had taken Cora's place at the head of the table, "try the Johannisberg. It is some given to me by Prince Metternich when I was at Vienna, and is from grapes raised in his own vineyards. Rare stuff it is for those who like such light wines."

"Thank you, Sir Nigel ; but Binns, I see, has brought the three elements, so I'll e'en brew some whisky-toddy," replied the magistrate.

The conversation now became more noisy



and animated. The approaching war, the treaty of neutrality between the Scandinavian and the Western Powers, whether our fleet had yet entered the Euxine, or whether Luders had yet burst into the Dobrudscha, became the prevailing topics, and in interest seemed fully to rival that never failing subject at a country table, fox-hunting.

The county pack, the meet of the Fifeshire hounds at the kennels, or on the green slopes of Largo; of the Buccleuch pack at Blacklaw, Ancrum, and so forth; their runs by wood and wold, loch and lee, rock and river, with many a perilous leap and wild adventure in the field, over a rough and hilly country, were narrated with animation, and descanted on with interest, though all such sank into insignificance beside the history of a hunt in Bengal, where General Rammerscales had figured in pursuit of a tiger (long the terror of the district), seated in a lofty *howdah* of basket-work, strapped on the back of an elephant, twelve feet high to the shoulder, accompanied by the major of his regiment, each armed with two double-barrelled guns.

The tiger, which measured nine feet from his nose to the tip of his tail, and five in height, had been roused from among the



jungle grass, and was a brute of the most ferocious kind, yellow in hide, and striped with beautiful transverse bars of black and brown. He was well known in that district. With his tremendous jaws he had carried off many a foal and buffalo ; by a single stroke of his claws he had disembowelled and rent open the body of more than one tall dark *sowar* of the 3rd Bengal Light Cavalry ; and as for sheep and goats, he made no more account of them than if they had been so many shrimps.

With a shrill, short scream of rage, on finding that he was brought to bay at last, he threw himself in cat-fashion on his back, belly upwards, his small and quivering ears close on the back of his head, his dreadful claws thrust out, his eyes glaring like two gigantic carbuncles, his wide, red mouth distended, and every wiry whisker bristling with rage and fury.

The general fired both barrels of his first gun. One shot failed ; but the other wounded the tiger in the shoulder, and only served to make him more savage ; though, instead of springing upwards, he lay thus on the defensive, gathered up in a round ball.

The major, an enormously fat man, weighing more than twenty stone, now leant over



the *howdah* to take a cool and deliberate aim ; but the elephant in the same moment happened to bend his fore-knees, for the claws of the tiger were inserted in his trunk.

Losing all balance by this unlucky motion, the poor major toppled headlong over the *howdah*, just as both barrels of his gun exploded harmlessly, amid a yell from all the Indian hunters as they thought of his fate.

But, "with a mighty squelch," as the general phrased it, the major, with his twenty-two stone weight of flesh and bone, fell prone upon the fair, white, upturned belly of the tiger !

Terrified, breathless, and bewildered by an antagonist so ponderous, and by such an unexpected mode of attack, the tiger started up, and fled from the scene, leaving the major untouched and unharmed, but seated ruefully among the jungle grass, and with considerable doubts as to his safety and his own identity.

The parish minister fairly overmatched this story by the narrative of a fox which had been drowned by a mussel !

Prior to being appointed pastor of Calderwood Kirk, through the favour of its patron, Sir



Nigel, he had been assistant in a parish situated on the borders of one of the great salt lochs in the western highlands.

When riding one morning along the shore, opposite the Summer Isles, he was surprised to see a large, grey fox busy among the basket-mussels, thick clusters of which were adhering to the dark whin rocks which the ebb tide had left dry. The sea was coming in fast; but, strange to say, Reynard seemed to be so much engaged in breakfasting on shell-fish that he was heedless of that important circumstance.

Dismounting, and tying his horse to a tree, the minister made a circuit to reach the place, and being armed with a heavy-handled riding-whip, he had no fear of the encounter; but by the time he arrived at the mussel-beds, the rapid tide had overflowed them, and the fox had disappeared. So, remounting, the minister pursued his way into the mountains.

Returning along the shore by the same path in the evening, when the tide had ebbed, he again saw Reynard in the same place, but lying quite dead, and, on examination, discovered that he was held fast by the tongue between the sharp shells of one of the basket-mussels, which are sometimes seven inches



long, and adhere with intense strength to the rocks by the beard, known to the learned as a powerful *byssus*. Seized and retained thus, as if in the grasp of a steel vice, the fox, which had been in the habit of seeking the sea shore to feed on the mussels, had been held fast, until drowned by the advancing tide, which there flows rapidly in from the Atlantic.

This story elicited roars of laughter from the fox-hunters, who had never heard of a brush being taken in such a fashion ; and Berkeley expressed astonishment that the anecdote had never found its way into the columns of *Bell's Life*, or other sporting journals.

The provost and minister gabbled about presbyteries and synods, the moderation of calls, elders, deacons, and overtures to the General Assembly, anent sundry ecclesiastical matters, particularly the adoption of organs, and other innovations that savoured of prelacy, making up a jargon which, to many present, and even to me, proved quite unintelligible ; but now, as a military man, old Rammerscales seized me by a button, for there was no eluding being bored by him.

He had been so many years in India that he found a difficulty in assuring himself that



he was not "up country" and in cantonments still.

Thus, if the rooms were warm, the general grumbled that there was no *punkah* to swing over his head, the baldness of which he polished vigorously, and muttered about "tat-ties of iced water."

He calculated everything by its value in rupees, and talked much of compounds and cantonments; of *batta* and marching money, of *chutney* and *chunam*, and all manner of queer things, including sepoy and *sowars*, *subadars*, *havildars*, and *jemidars*; thus the most casual remark drew forth some Indian reference.

The cold of last night reminded him of what he had endured in the mountains of Afghanistan; and the dark clouds of this morning were exactly like some he had seen near Calcutta, when a sepoy was killed by his side by a stroke of lightning, which twisted up the barrel of his musket like a screw—"yes, sir—like a demmed corkscrew!"

Next, the gas offended his eyes, which had been so long accustomed to the oil lamps or oil-shades of his bungalow; and then he spoke to all the servants, even respectable old Mr. Binns (who had been for forty years like



Sir Nigel's shadow) as if they had been so many *sycees*, grass-cutters, or tent-pitchers, making them start whenever he addressed them ; for he seemed to bark or snap out his words and wishes at "the precious Griffs," as he termed them.

On the other hand, I was bored by the provost, who, like the M.P. (a peace-at-any-price man), by no means approved of the expected war, and informed Berkeley and myself that—

"Our trade—soldiering, to wit—was a deuced poor one—a speculation, a loss, and never profit to any one, individually or collectively."

Berkeley smiled superciliously, eyed the provost through his glass, and blandly asked him to repeat his remark twice over, professing that he did not understand the worthy man.

"If you mean that you disapprove of the intended war, my good friend," said he, "I—haw—quite agree with you. Why the deuce should I fight for the 'sick man' at Constantinople ; or for the Turks or the Tartars of the Crimea ? It's a horrid bore."

Amid all this uncongenial conversation, I longed for the time when the seniors would



move towards the drawing room, from whence the sounds of music and of voices sweetly attuned were heard to issue at times ; for there my star was shining—Louisa Loftus, so beautiful to look upon, and yet whom it seemed so hopeless in me to love !

Lost in reverie, and full of her image, it was some time before I became aware that my distinguished brother in arms, Mr. De Warr Berkeley, was addressing me.

“I beg your pardon,” said I, nervously ; “did you speak ?”

“I was remarking,” he lisped, languidly, “that these good people here are—haw—very pleasant, and all that sort of thing ; but have little of the—haw—the—haw——”

“What ?”

“Oh—the *odeur de la bonne société* about them.”

“The deuce !” said I, with some annoyance, for I was conscious that at our end of the table were really gathered the lions of my uncle’s dinner party. “I hope you don’t include our host in this—he represents the oldest line of baronets in Scotland.”

“In Scotland—haw—very good,” he drawled.

“Sir Nigel is my uncle,” said I, pointedly.



"Yes, by the way, I crave pardon; so deuced stupid of me, when I know well that there are no such sticklers about precedence and dignity as your little baronets."

Coming from a conceited *parvenu*, the cool impudence of this remark was so amusing that I burst into a fit of laughter; and at that moment, by a singular coincidence, Sir Nigel, who had been engaged in an animated discussion, almost amounting to a dispute, with Spittal of Lickspittal, the M.P., now suddenly raised his voice, and without at all intending it, sent one random shot after another at my fashionable comrade.

"I can assure you, sir," he continued, "that such cosmopolitan views as yours, politically and socially, can never be endorsed by me. Thackeray says—and he says truly—that God has created no more offensive creature than a Scotch snob, and I quite agree with him. The chief aim of such is to be thought an Englishman (just as some Englishmen affect the foreigner), and a deplorable caricature he makes of the Englishman in language, bearing, and appearance. An English snob, in whatever his line may be, is, as Thackeray has shown us, a great and amusing original; but a Scotch snob is a poor and vile



imitation, and like all counterfeits is easily discernible: Birmingham at once. I know no greater hot-bed of snobbery than our law-courts, sir, especially those of Edinburgh. Binns, pass the claret."

The M.P. bowed, and smiled deprecatingly, for he had long figured among the said courts as one who would joyfully have blacked the boots of the lord advocate or the ministry.

I felt almost sorry for Berkeley while my uncle spurred his hobby against the M.P.; the ugly cap fitted so exactly.

"I know," resumed Sir Nigel, "that in a nation of tuft-hunters like the British, whose bible is the 'Peerage,' a man with a handle to his name, however small it may be, is a trump card indeed; hence the adoration of rank, which, as some one says, 'if folly in London, deepens into positive vice in the country.'"

"Then what do you say of your poor Scottish metropolis, whose aristocracy consists of a few psalm-singing—aw—bailies and young legal prigs of the bar, whose importance is only equalled by their necessities—boiled mutton and thin Cape Madeira?" said Berkeley, glad of an opportunity to sneer at something Scotch.



"I have known a few honest fellows—and men of first-rate ability, too—connected with the Scottish Parliament House," said Sir Nigel.

"But that, I suppose, was in the old Tory days, when all Edinburgh fell down in the mud to worship George IV., the first gentleman in Europe," said the M.P. as a retort, at which my uncle laughed loudly.

But thus, by his remarks at the fag end of some discussion, Sir Nigel had the effect of completely silencing, and unintentionally mortifying, Berkeley, who continued to sip his wine in silence, and with something of malevolence in his eye, till Binns announced coffee, and we repaired to the drawing-room.







## CHAPTER VI.

No, tempt me not—love's sweetest flower  
Hath poison in its smile ;  
Love only woos with dazzling power,  
To fetter hearts the while.  
I will not wear its rosy chain,  
Nor e'en its fragrance prove ;  
I fear too much love's silent pain—  
No, no ! I will not love."



THROUGH the cool and airy corridor, with its cabinets full of Sèvres jars, Indian bowls, and sculptured marble busts—on one side the Marli horses in full career crowning a buhl pedestal ; on the other a bronze Laocoon, with his two sons, in the coils of the brazen serpents—we proceeded to the drawing-room, a merry and laughing party, for it was impossible to resist the influence of a good dinner, good wines, and jovial company.

On entering we found the ladies variously engaged. A graceful group was about the



piano ; the Countess of Chillingham was half hidden in the soft arms of a vast velvet chair, where she was playing indolently with her fan, and watching her daughter ; others were busy with books of engravings, and some were laughing at the pencil sketches of a local artist, who portrayed the wars of the Celts and Anglo-Saxons, and other nude barbarians, while old Binns and two powdered lacqueys served the tea and coffee on silver trays.

I had hoped to meet Lady Louisa's eye on entering, but the first smile that greeted me was the sweet one of Cora, who, approaching me, put her plump little arm through mine, and said, half reproachfully and half jestingly—

“How long you have lingered over that odious wine, and you have not been here for six years, Newton. Think of that—for six years.”

“How many may elapse before I am here again ? Do you reproach me, Cora ?” I was beginning, for her voice and smile were very alluring.

“Yes, very much,” said she, with playful severity.

“Your papa, my good uncle, is somewhat



of a stickler for etiquette, consequently I could not rise before the seniors ; and then this is the festive season of the year. But hush ; Lady Louisa is about to sing, I think."

"A duet, too."

"With whom?"

"Mr. Berkeley. They are always practising duets."

"Always?"

"Yes ; she dotes on music."

"Ah, and he pretends to do so, too."

Spreading her ample flounces over the carved walnut-wood piano stool, Lady Louisa ran her white fingers rapidly and with some brilliancy of execution—certainly with perfect confidence—over the keys of a sonorous grand piano ; while Berkeley stood near, with an air of considerable affectation and satisfaction, to accompany her, his delicate hands being cased in the tightest of straw-coloured kid gloves ; and all the room became hushed into well-bred silence, while they favoured us with the famous duet by *Leonora* and the *Conde di Luna*, "*Vivra ! Contende il Guibilo.*"

Berkeley acquitted himself pretty well ; so well, that I regretted my own *timbre* tones. But I must confess to being enchanted while Louisa sang ; her voice was very seductive,



and she had been admirably trained by a good Italian master. I remained a silent listener, full of admiration for her performance, and not a little for the contour of her fine neck and snowy shoulders, from which her maize-coloured opera cloak had fallen.

“Lady Loftus,” said Berkeley, “your touch upon the piano is like—like——”

“What, Mr. Berkeley? Now tax your imagination for a new compliment.”

“The fingers—haw—of a tenth muse.”

She uttered a merry laugh, and continued to run those fingers over the keys.

“Homely style of thing, the baronet’s dinner,” I heard him whisper, as he stooped over her, with a covert smile in his eyes.

“Ah, you prefer the continental mode we are adopting so successfully in England?”

“The dinner *à la Russe*; exactly.”

“Ah, you will get dinners enough of that kind in the Crimea, more than you may have appetite for,” she replied, with a manner so quiet, that it was difficult to detect a little satire.

“Most likely,” drawled Berkeley, as he twirled his moustaches, without seeing the retort to his bad taste; and then, without invitation, the fair musician gave us a song or



two from the "Trovatore;" till her watchful mother advancing, contrived to end her performance, and, greatly to my satisfaction, marched her into the outer drawing-room.

"Cora must sing something now," said I; "her voice has long been strange to me."

"I cannot sing after Lady Loftus's brilliant performance," she said, nervously and hurriedly. "Don't ask me, pray, Newton dear."

"Nonsense! she shall sing us something. We were talking about snobbish people in the other room," said honest, old blundering Sir Nigel. "I have observed it is a peculiarity of that style of society in Scotland to banish alike national music and national songs. But such is not our *rôle* in Calderwood Glen. A few of our girls certainly attempt with success such glorious airs as those we have just heard, or those from "Roberto il Diavolo" and "Lucia;" but I have heard men, who might sing a plain Scottish song fairly enough, and with credit, make absolute maniacs of themselves by attempting to howl like *Edgardo* in the churchyard, or like *Manrico* at the prison-gate—an affectation of operatic excellence with which I have no patience."

"To take out in fashion what we lose in



genuine amusement and enthusiasm is an English habit becoming more common in Scotland every day," said the general.

"So Cora, darling, sing us one of our songs. Give Newton the old ballad of 'The Thistle and the Rose.' I am sure he has not heard it for many a day."

"Not since I was last under this roof, dear uncle," said I.

This ballad was one of the memories of our childhood, and a great favourite with the old Tory baronet; so I led Cora to the piano.

"It will sound so odd—so primitive, in fact—to these people, especially after what we have heard, Newton," she urged, in a whisper; "but then papa is *so* obstinate."

"But to please me, Cora."

"To please you, Newton, I would do anything," she replied, with a blush and a happy smile.

I stood by her side while she sang a simple old ballad, that had been taught her by my mother. The air was plaintive, and the words were quaint. By whom they were written I know not, for they are neither to be found in Allan Ramsay's "*Miscellany*," or any other book of Scottish songs that I have seen. Cora sang with great sweetness, and her voice awakened a flood of old memories



and forgotten hopes and fears, with many a boyish aspiration, for music, like perfume, can exert a wonderful effect upon the imagination and on the memory.

#### THE THISTLE AND THE ROSE.

It was in old times,  
When trees composed rhymes,  
And flowers did with elegy flow;  
In an old battle-field,  
That fair flowers did yield,  
A rose and a thistle did grow.

On a soft summer day,  
The rose chanced to say,  
"Friend thistle, I'll with you be plain;  
And if you'd *simply* be  
But united to me  
You would ne'er be a thistle again."

The thistle said, "My spears  
Shield me from all fears,  
While you quite unguarded remain;  
And well, I suppose,  
Though I were a rose,  
I'd fain be a thistle again."

"Dearest friend," quoth the rose,  
"You falsely suppose—  
Bear witness ye flowers of the plain!—  
You'd take so much pleasure  
In beauty's vast treasure,  
You'd ne'er be a thistle again."

The thistle, by guile,  
Preferred the rose's smile  
To all the gay flowers of the plain;  
She threw off her sharp spears,  
Unarmed she appears—  
And then were united the twain.



But one cold, stormy day,  
While helpless she lay,  
No longer could sorrow refrain ;  
She gave a deep moan,  
And with many an "Ohone !  
Alas for the days when a Stuart filled the  
throne—  
OH ! WERE I A THISTLE AGAIN !"

Sir Nigel clapped his hands in applause,  
and said to the M.P.—

"Lickspittal, my boy, I consider that an  
anti-centralization song—but, of course, your  
sympathies and mine are widely apart."

"It is decidedly behind the age, at all  
events," said the member, laughing.

"You have a delightful voice, Cora—soft  
and sweet as ever," said I in her ear.

"Thanks, Cora," added Sir Nigel, patting  
her white shoulder with his strong embrowned  
hand. "Newton seems quite enchanted ; but  
you must not seek to captivate our lancer."

"Why may I not, papa ?"

"Because, as Thackeray says, 'A lady who  
sets her heart on a lad in uniform, must  
prepare to change lovers pretty quickly, or  
her life will be but a sad one.'"

"You are always quoting Thackeray," said  
Cora, with a little perceptible shrug of her  
plump shoulders.




"Is such really the case, Mr. Noreliff?" asked Lady Louisa, who had approached us; "are you gentlemen of the sword so heartless?"

"Nay, I trust that, in this instance, the author of 'Esmond' rather quizzes than libels the service," said I. "How beautiful the conservatory looks when lighted up," I added, drawing back the crimson velvet hangings that concealed the door, which stood invitingly open.

"Yes; there are some magnificent exotics here," said the tall, pale beauty, as she swept through, accompanied by Cora and myself.

I had hoped to have a single moment for a tête-à-tête with her; but in vain, for the pertinacious Berkeley, with his slow, invariable saunter, lounged in after us, and, with all the air of a privileged man, followed us from flower to flower as we passed critically along, displaying much vapid interest, and some ignorance alike of botany and floriculture.

Without the conservatory the clear, starry sky of a Scottish winter night arched its blue dome above the summits of the Lomonds; and within, thanks to skill and hot-water pipes, were the yellow flowering cactus, the golden lobelia, the scarlet querena, the slender





tendrils and blue flowers of the liana, the oranges and grapes of the sunny tropics.

"What is that dangling from the vine branch overhead?" asked Lady Louisa.

"Just above us?" said Cora, laughing, as she looked up with a charming smile on her bright girlish face.

"Haw — mistletoe, by Jove!" exclaimed Berkeley; looking up too, with his glass in his eye, and his hands in his pockets.

I am not usually a very timid fellow in matters appertaining to that peculiar parasite; yet I must own that when I saw Lady Loftus, in all the glory of her aristocratic loveliness, so pale and yet so dark, with cousin Cora standing coquettishly by her side, under the gifted branch, that my heart failed me, and its pulses fairly stood still.

"My privilege, cousin," said I, and kissed Cora, as I might have done a sister, ere she could draw back; and the usually laughing girl trembled, and grew so deadly pale, that I surveyed her with surprise.

Lady Louisa hastily drew aside, as I bent over her hand, and barely ventured to touch it with my lips; but judge of my rage and her hauteur when my cool and sarcastic brother officer, Mr. Berkeley, came languidly forward,



and claiming what he termed "the privilege of the season," ere she could avoid it, somewhat brusquely pressed his well-moustached lip to her cheek.

Though affecting to smile, she drew haughtily back, with her nether lip quivering, and her black eyes sparkling dangerously.

"The season, as you term it, for these absurdities is over, Berkeley," said I, gravely. "Moreover, this house is not a casino, and that trophy should have been removed by the gardener long since."

I twitched down the branch, and tossed it into a corner. Berkeley only uttered one of his quiet, almost noiseless, laughs, and, without being in the least put out of countenance, made a species of pirouette on the brass heels of his glazed boots, which brought him face to face with the Countess, who at that moment came into the conservatory after her daughter, whom she rarely permitted to go far beyond the range of her eyeglass.

"Lady Chillingham," said he, resolved at once to launch into conversation, "have you heard the rumour that our friend, Lord Lucan, is to command a brigade in the Army of the East?"

"I have heard that he is to command a



division, Mr. Berkeley, but Lord Paget is to have a brigade," replied the Countess, coldly and precisely.

"Ah, Paget—haw—glad to hear it," said he, as he passed loungingly away; "he was an old chum of my father's—haw—doocid glad."

It was a weakness of Berkeley's to talk thus; indeed, it was a common mess-room joke with Wilford, Scriven, Studhome, and others of ours, to bring the peerage on the *tapis*, at a certain hour of the evening, and "trot him out;" but on hearing him speak thus of his father, who—honest man—began life as a drayman, it was too much for me, and I fairly laughed aloud.

The salute he had so daringly given Lady Loftus was to me a keen source of jealous anger and annoyance, which I could neither readily forgive nor forget, and had the old duelling fashion still been extant the penalty might have proved a dear one. I had the bitter consciousness that she whose hand I had barely ventured to touch with a lip that trembled with suppressed emotion had been brusquely saluted—actually kissed before my face—by one for whom I had rather more, if possible, than a profound contempt.



What she thought of the episode I know not. A horror of what all well-bred people deem a scene no doubt prevailed, for she took her mother's arm, and passed away, while Cora and I followed them.

Jealousy suggested that much must have passed between them prior to my arrival, otherwise Berkeley, with all his assurance, dared not have acted as he did. This supposition was to me the source of real torture and mortification.

"When love steals into the nature," says a writer, "day by day infiltrating its sentiments, as it were through every crevice of the being, it will enlist every selfish trait into the service, so that he who loves is half enamoured of himself; but where the passion comes with the overwhelming force of a sudden conviction, when the whole heart is captivated at once, self is forgotten, and the image of the loved one is all that presents itself."

Sleepless that night I lay, tormenting myself with the "trifles light as air," that to young men in my condition are "confirmations strong as proofs of Holy Writ."

At last I slept; but my dreams—those visions that come before the sleeping mind



and eye towards the hours of morning—were not of her I loved, but of my pretty and playful cousin, fair-skinned and dark-haired Cora Calderwood.







## CHAPTER VII.

What though our love was never told,  
Or breathed in sighs alone;  
By sighs that would not be controlled  
Its growing strength was shown.  
The touch that thrilled us with delight,  
The glance, by art untamed,  
In one short moon, as brief as bright,  
That tender truth proclaimed.

ALARIC WATTS.



EXT morning I resolved that, if possible, it should not pass without some attempt being made to discover the state of Lady Louisa's heart — how she was affected towards me, and whether I had any chance, however remote, of reviving or securing the interest I trusted she had in me when last we met in England. But over night the snow had fallen heavily; it was six inches deep on the lawn, as Willie Pitblado told me. The Lomonds were clothed in ghastly white to their summits, and as we seemed fated to



be caged up indoors all day, my chances of seeing Louisa alone would be remote indeed.

In the library and drawing-rooms I found all the guests of last night assembled, save the minister, doctor, and lawyer, who had ridden home, and save her I sought.

The snow caused universal regret, for various excursions had been in progress—some for visiting the ruined castle at Piteadie; some for riding so far as Lochleven; and others, farther still, to see the fragments that remain of the old abbey of Balmerino.

The Countess and her daughter, arrayed in a charming morning toilette, appeared just as the roar of the gong summoned us to a Scottish breakfast; and of the splendours of such a repast, what gourmand hath not heard?

There were venison, mutton, cold grouse, and ptarmigan, rizzard haddocks from the Firth of Forth, salmon from the Tay, and honey from the Lomond hills; a *liqueur*-stand, containing whisky and brandy, stood at Sir Nigel's right hand. At one end of the table was tea, presided over by Cora; at the other, where Miss Wilford officiated, was coffee.

Over the snowy landscape a glorious flood



of sunshine was pouring through the stone mullions of the oriel windows, casting shadows of the old and leafless trees far across the waste of dazzling white.

I had the pleasure of being seated by the side of Lady Loftus, and we chatted away pleasantly of people whom we had met, and places where we had been. The links of the old chain were being rapidly taken up, and every time I looked into the quiet depths of her dark eyes I felt a strong emotion pass over mine.

Berkeley sat on her other side, but I could perceive that she was politely reserved with him ; so the art of impudence, an art which he had studied carefully, had availed him but little after the use to which he had put it last night.

"And you go to the East with pleasure?" she asked, casually, after a pause.

"With pleasure, and yet with one great regret," said I, as I lightly touched her hand.

"And this regret, is it a secret?"

"It cannot be spoken of here ; and yet a little explanation—one word, it may be—shall send me away the happiest fellow in the Crimean expedition."

"Take courage," she said, in a low voice,



that made my heart leap with hope and anticipation.

"Newton, what are you and Lady Loftus talking about so impressively? But, perhaps, I should not inquire," said my uncle, as he carved the cold grouse, and a faint shade of annoyance flitted over the pale face of my companion.

"Well, Sir Nigel," I replied, "I was simply about to say that ere we see such a breakfast as this again, we shall have had a rough turn with the Russians, and talked polyglot-wise with fellows of all nations in the allied camp; have drunk sherbet, perhaps, with the Sultan, ogled his ladies at the gilded lattices, and smoked a *chibouque* with Giafar, Mesrour, and other friends of the Commander of the Faithful."

The flow of my spirits contrasted somewhat with the ebb of Berkeley's. He sat silent, and pulled from time to time his long moustaches and whiskers, which were mingled together—the envy of our apple-cheeked cornets.

But now Mr. Binnis came in with the household letter-bag—a leather case, which bore Sir Nigel's name and arms on a brass plate, and its contents (always so welcome at a country



breakfast-table) were distributed amongst us.

There were newspapers and letters for all present but me, luckily. I say luckily, for I was hourly in fear of having my short leave cancelled, and receiving a summons from the colonel to head-quarters.

"Lord Slubber de Gullion expresses great surprise that we are staying so long in Scotland," said the Countess of Chillingham, as she rapidly read over a letter written in a large, round-text hand.

"An old bore, mamma."

"Don't say so, Louisa."

The name, which is as near the original as I dare give it, sounded oddly ; but there came a time when it was to prove a sad name to me.

"You know Slubber?" said Berkeley, in a low voice, to me.

I shook my head. On which he resumed—

"He is an old peer of a good Anglo-Norman line, as the name imports ; rich as a Jew, and sails one of the best yachts that ever loosed canvas at Cowes ; a house in Piccadilly ; a box at the opera ; another of a different kind in the Highlands ; a moor in Ireland—bog, some people call it ; an excellent stud, and pack of



hounds ; a glorious cellar. Rich old fellow, indeed ; a great chum of my father's. His dinners are said to be—haw—perfection, from the caviare on sliced bread, *à la Russe*, to the coffee and curaçoa, the mocha and maraschino."

The ladies were all busy with their crossed and recrossed epistles from friends, gossips, and correspondents. My uncle was put in excellent humour by a missive from a meeting of the heritors and others interested in the county hunt, assigning to him the mastership of the hounds, with a couple of thousands per annum towards his expenses, and the defray of damages, if he undertook to hunt the country between the Firths of Forth and Tay.

"You have some jolly good hunters in the—haw—stables, Sir Nigel," said Berkeley, who was somewhat of a sporting man.

"Yes, fairish,"

"Dunearn is a clean-limbed animal," said the general.

"Yes ; but he was not improved by your gallop among the melon beds," replied Sir Nigel, laughing. "Cost me four hundred and fifty pounds, that horse did. Saline, the grey, with the dark fetlocks, is a better hunter for clearing fences, and crossing a stiff country, and yet cost me only two hundred and ten pounds."



After opening his third or fourth letter, Berkeley evidently received news that was not pleasant, for I heard him mutter almost an oath, as he said, uneasily—

“Jockeyed! Sold by the jockey, Trayner! A cheque on his bank for the amount; about as good as one on the Banks of Newfoundland.”

“No bad news, Berkeley, I hope,” said my uncle.

“Oh—haw—nothing, Sir Nigel,” said he, and retiring into an oriel, he drew forth a memorandum book, and proceeded to consider the weights for a forthcoming race; and so absorbed was he that Cora laughed aloud on hearing him mutter in this fashion, pulling his long moustaches the while—

“Mail-train, five years, eight stone two pounds. Swish-tail, three years, six stone four pounds. Queen Victorina, aged, rather, six stone four pounds,” and so on.

As we rose from the breakfast-table, and broke into groups, he dropped a letter in a female handwriting. I picked it up, and followed him. It was open, and the signature, “*Agnes Auriol*,” caught my eye.

By that name I knew the writer, and could have crushed Berkeley’s chances, perhaps, for



ever ; but as no such use could be honourably made of it, I touched him on the shoulder, simply saying—

“ Pardon me, you have dropped this.”

He changed colour painfully as he received the letter, walked to the fire, cast it in, and carefully waited until it was consumed.

I was not without hopes of luring Lady Louisa into the library, the conservatory, or some quiet nook, as a ride or a ramble out of doors was not to be thought of ; but my uncle destroyed my chances, by suddenly announcing, with one of his loud and merry laughs, that the glass was rising, the day would yet be fine, and that gentlemen must kill their next day’s dinner or go without. He was going to beat the thickets for a few birds, and he had guns for all the party.

The old general grumbled an unmistakable dissent, and Berkeley pocketed his betting-book, drawling out, as he looked at the snowy landscape and left the room—

“ A horrid bore !”

“ Come, general,” said my hearty old uncle, who had not heard Berkeley’s uncivil response, “ don’t think yet of substituting flannel bags for top-boots ; Ascension turtle and pink champagne for patience and water-gruel ; hot



fomentations for hot whisky-toddy ! Come ! put on your shot-belt ; the gout is a long way off yet."

"Gad ! I am not so sure of that, Sir Nigel ; and then there is this cursed jungle-fever, which I got when up the country with the 3rd Bengal, and I have a horror of toast and water, even when flavoured with pale dry sherry."

"Where is Mr. Berkeley loitering ; what is he about ?"

"Making up his mind, papa, or what he considers to be such," said Cora.

"Fie, Cora," said the old baronet, "you should never quiz a guest."

Berkeley, re-entering, urged that he had letters to write, and so must remain behind ; so said Mr. Spittal, the M.P. Thus the shooting party was reduced to Sir Nigel, the keeper, and myself.

Cora brought us each a flask of brandy, then a little packet of sandwiches cut by her own pretty hands in the housekeeper's pantry. These she stuffed into our pockets, and away we went to the keeper's lodge, I, for cogent reasons of my own, most unwillingly, though Lady Louisa smilingly kissed her hand twice to me from the drawing-room window ; but



as Cora and all the ladies did so at the same time, and waved their handkerchiefs, I could gather but little from that mark of her attention.

Pitblado's cottage was more than a mile distant. The snow was thawing fast in the sunshine; but we were accoutred in stout leather leggings, and thick, warm shooting coats and caps.

My uncle's manner was fidgety, as we walked onward. He had evidently something on his mind, which he could not express in words, and I could give him no aid. After a pause—

"Newton, lad," said he, "I don't think that you take to your gun very willingly to-day."

"What leads you to think so, uncle?"

"You continued to look back at the house, so long as even the vanes of it were in view, as if the game there had more attractions than the birds out of doors."

"I merely looked back to bow to Lady Loftus and the others," said I, laughing.

"There it is! Why do you put Lady Loftus first?"

"Perhaps because her figure was tallest—I don't know—perhaps I should have named



Cora, as the Lady of Calderwood," said I laughing, to hide my growing confusion.

"Newton Norcliff, you have a tenderness for Lady Chillingham's daughter," said Sir Nigel, gravely.

"Have I? Don't know that I have, sir," I replied, actually flushing.

"Of course you have, and you know it," said he, emphatically.

"But who told you of this?"

"Cora."

"Cora?"

"Yes, with tears in her eyes, this morning."

"Tears! This is incomprehensible. I have only been a single night under the same roof with Lady Loftus."

"Yet Cora has discovered your secret. Girls are quick-sighted in such matters, I can tell you."

"But why had Cora tears?"

"Don't, for the life of me, know, unless it be that she fears your love will be but moonshine in the water. They are a cold, calculating, and ambitious family, Lord Chillingham's, and will fly their hawk at higher game than mere landed gentry."

"She is a good girl, Cora," said I, thoughtfully.



"If you have any fancy for Louisa Loftus, I will back you to any amount," said my blunt uncle, stoutly; "but I don't think my lady mother would relish such a suitor as a lieutenant of cavalry. I have already heard her hint that Lord Slubber has made proposals, with offers of a brilliant settlement; but the man is older than I, and could no more hunt a country or march up a snow-covered brae, as we do now, than fly through the air. At all events, don't throw your heart away farther than is necessary, and what is more, in the meantime, look sharp, I say."

"Sharp!" I exclaimed, bewildered by this odd jumble of advice. "How—why?"

"Don't you perceive what is going on?"

"What, uncle?"

"That yaw-hawing donkey, Berkeley, is doing all he can to take the wind out of your sails."

"Uncle, I have indeed felt a dread of this. He has, you know, a handsome fortune."

"I would not let a fellow like that go neck and neck with me," said Sir Nigel. "I'd cut in and win at a hand gallop. "It is your talking, pushing, forward men — seeming always confident of what they say, never



acknowledging an error or confessing a defeat, that are too often allowed to take the lead in life. With average ability, and ten times the average amount of assurance, they often reach the goal that bashful merit never gets a sight of. So cut in, I say, and win, if you want her."

While he was running on thus, I could not but admire, at his years, the hale, sturdy figure, and bluff, hearty bearing of Sir Nigel, in his old shooting toggery. He was always a crack shot, and in youth and middle life had been one of the keenest curlers and golfers between the West and East Neuks of Fife.

It was his great boast that he could yet, if he chose, strike a golf ball from the street over each of the tallest spires of St. Andrew's. A fair hand, too, with the pistol, he had, as I have stated, winged more than one political antagonist, in squabbles about the old Reform Bill, in the days of Brougham, Grey, and Russell. Throw your glove in the air, and he would shoot any finger off it you named; and he would hit a cricket ball, were it cast ever so high, with a single rifle bullet. Thus in his hands I was sent to join the lancers, somewhat of a master-of-arms, and certainly a complete horseman.



Sir Nigel, withal, had much the air of a Scotch man-about-town ; in Edinburgh a different style of man from he of the same genus in London—he of the glazed boots and carefully-trimmed whiskers, exquisitely solemn and unimpressible, as if he had seen all the world, and found there was nothing in it.

The “dandy” who hovers about the New Club in Princes-street is usually a six-foot man, bronzed and sunburnt (he has served somewhere—in India generally), and heavily moustached. He carried a huge stick ; he wears rough Tweed suits, and double-soled brogues, with toe-pieces and rows of hobnails, as if ever ready for facing the hills and the frozen heather. He may be a snob, like his English brother, Dundreary ; but he has something rough and service-like in his bearing that is suggestive of climbing rocks, fishing, hunting, and shooting.

But now Sir Nigel’s warning, Cora’s sharp discovery of my secret, and the knowledge that Berkeley remained behind in full possession of the field, filled me with anxiety and annoyance. The shooting excursion bored me, and I looked for the end before we had well begun.



What might those hours of absence from her cost me ?

We reached the gamekeeper's cottage, which was situated amid a dense copsewood, beside a whimpering burn, and near King James's Well. Moss of emerald hue covered all the thatched roof, and in summer green trailers and scarlet-runners made all the whitewashed walls and little windows gay.

Now the former were ornamented by ghastly rows of half-decayed hawks, wild cats, fiamarts, and weasels, while the white, bare skull of a stag, with its gallant antlers outspread, was fixed above the door. Along the garden paling the dead hawks hung in dozens, as a regular war was waged between them and old Pitblado, who spent half his days in baiting traps ; thus the breeze that passed his cottage was laden with odours, but not those of "a bank of violets."

He was a fine, hale old man, with a weather-beaten aspect, short, grizzled hair, and keen grey eyes, that glistened and grew moist as he warmly shook my hand, and welcomed me to the glen again.

Though respectful and kind, his bearing was not without a native dignity, for he was proud of considering himself the last repre-



sentative of an old line of Fifeshire lairds, the Pitblados of Pitblado and that ilk, who had lost their land and position long ago ; but in his old velveteen coat of no particular colour, his blue bonnet, network game-bag, and long, greasy overalls, Pitblado looked just as I had seen him last. Though "as soldiers in the march of life, we may never learn to mark time, time never fails to mark us."

"It was kind ond thochtfu' o' you, Maister Newton, to bring my laddie, Willie, hame to see me ere ye baith gaed to the wars ; and when there, I hope you ond he will tak' a' the care o' ilk ither ye can, for I could as ill spare him as Sir Nigel could spare you ; and gang where ye may, Maister Newton, ye'll ne'er ha'e a truer or a sibber friend than Willie Pitblado."

While the old man ran on thus, the dogs came bounding forth.

"Here," said my uncle, "is your old favourite pointer, the white and tan, alive yet."

"But he's a *dis*-appointer noo, Maister Newton, being blind, or bleared a bit ; yet I ha'e na the heart, or rather want o' heart, to put the puir beast awa'."

"And here is Keeper, too—brave old Keeper, that I played with when a boy," I exclaimed,



as a grand old mastiff, which knew my voice, sprang upon me with joy, whining and barking the while—a dog that was always gentle with children; that wagged his aristocratic tail at all ladies and gentlemen, but howled and growled fearfully at all beggars and poorly-clad folks.

There in that cottage old Willie now lived alone with his dogs and a tame otter. This was a somewhat remarkable animal. He had found it as a cub in a pond near Calderwood Glen, and gradually made it so domesticated that it responded to his voice, followed him about, and employed its talents in fishing for him, bringing each fish regularly to his feet, and at a signal diving in for more; and, strange enough, the terriers that hunted other otters never molested this one.

A pair of brisk young pointers were selected. We loaded, capped, shouldered our guns, and set forth. This was but the beginning of the day's sport, and I sighed with impatience for the end.

"Shall we try the belt of pines on the Standing Stane Rig?" said I.

"It used to be a braw cover for patricks (partridges), and in my father's day for grouse," said Pitblado; "but those Roosians, the



weasels, the piots, the hawks, and the shepherd's collies, ha'e played the de'il wi' it. At yon belt o' neeps, where ye see the shaws aboon the snaw, the deer often come out o' the pine wood to ha'e a feed, so we may chance to get a pot shot at one to-day."

"Come on, then," said Sir Nigel, impatiently. "Blaze away when you can, Newton. In the first week of next month partridge and pheasant shooting ends."

"By that time, uncle, in these swift days of steam, I may be sabreing or potting the Russians."

"Then sabre and pot with a will, boy."

It was from old Pitblado I had received all my early lessons in shooting and fishing, in the art of casting bullets and making flies; and I remember one special piece of advice he always gave me concerning salmon.

"Aye *droon* your salmon before ye land it, Maister Newton, for the dunt on the heid spyles the quality o' the fish; ond if ye hook a grilse, keep its tail up and well in the water till it's clean deid."

We saw no deer that day, and I shot so wildly and queerly, and generally bang into the centre of every covey, without selecting or covering the outside birds, that Sir Nigel



was bewildered, and old Pitblado lost all patience with me.

I traversed the snow-covered fields with them as one might do in a dream. I heard an occasional shot from my uncle's gun, the birds rose whirring into the air, and then one or two came tumbling down, to beat the snow with their wings, and stain it with their blood, ere Pitblado thrust them into his ample bag.

I heard his deep, impressive voice saying from time to time, "Mark!" when the coveys rose, and to watch where they alighted; then "Seek dead" to the pointers usually followed the bang! bang! of Sir Nigel's barrels; but my mind was completely absorbed in reverie. I saw only the face and figure of Louise Loftus, with Berkeley hovering about her.

I imagined him having achieved the *tête-à-tête* I had failed to procure. I imagined him opening the trenches by apologies, in set phraseology, for the offence he had perpetrated in the conservatory; and if he succeeded with such a basis for his operations, where might the matter end? Heavens! for all I knew to the contrary, in a solemn engagement, pending mamma Chillingham's con-



sent, for his lordship, the earl, was somewhat of a cypher in these matters, and in his own house generally. How ingeniously one can torment oneself when afflicted by jealousy; and thus much real misery was mine during that day's weary shooting, and right glad was I when the sun of January, declining beyond the western Lomond, warned my indefatigable uncle that it was time for us to return homeward, after having traversed in our peregrinations some fifteen miles of country.

He had shot four hares, and eighteen brace of birds, four of which were beautiful golden pheasants; while I had knocked over only two partridges—a result at which Cora and Lady Louisa laughed excessively, and each declared they would have the said birds specially cooked for themselves.







## CHAPTER VIII.

The heavens were marked by many a filmy streak  
E'en in the Orient, and the sun shone through  
Those lines, as Hope upon a mourner's cheek  
Sheds, meekly chastened, her delightful hue.  
From groves and meadows, all empearled with dew,  
Rose silvery mist, no eddying wind swept by ;  
The cottage chimneys, half concealed from view  
By their embowering foliage, sent on high  
Their pallid wreaths of smoke unruffled to the sky.  
BARTON.



EXT day the snow had entirely disappeared ; the country again looked fresh and green ; and when we met for breakfast, and while the ladies were exchanging their morning kisses lightly on each cheek—à la Française, rather than à l'Écossaise—various excursions were again projected.

Among others, Cora urged that we should visit the ruined Castle of Piteadie, which belonged of old to a branch of my uncle's family now extinct.

It stands on the slope of a gentle eminence,  
VOL. I.



some distance westward of the famous "long town" of Kirkaldy, a pleasant ride of ten miles or so from the glen ; and was a place we frequently rode to in the days of my boyhood, when my feats in the saddle were performed on a shaggy, barrel-bellied Shetland pony ; so I longed to see the old ruin again.

A message was sent to the stable-yard after luncheon, and horses were ordered for the party, which was to consist of Lady Louisa, Cora, Miss Wilford, Berkeley, the M.P., and myself.

The ladies soon appeared in their riding-habits ; and, to my perhaps partial fancy, there seemed something matchless in the grace with which Louisa Loftus held, or draped up, the gathered folds of her ample dark blue skirt in her tightly-gloved left hand.

There was the faintest flush on her usually pale cheek, a furtive glancing in her long-lashed dark eyes, as she threw her veil over her shoulder, gave a last smoothing to the braids of her black hair, and tripped down the front steps, leaning on the arm of her courteous old host, to where our cavalry stood, pawing the gravel impatiently, arching their necks, and champing their bright steel bits.

We were soon mounted and *en route*. Cora



and Lady Louisa, who were resolved on having a little private gossip, after merrily quizzing me about my dragoon seat on the saddle, rode at first together ; and, as we paired off down the avenue, followed by my man, Willie Pitblado, and another well-mounted groom, I found myself alongside of Berkeley, after Sir Nigel, who had a county meeting to attend at Cupar, left us.

"Your uncle's stables make a good turn-out of cavalry," said Berkeley ; "this grey is a good bit of horseflesh."

"'Treads well above his pasterns,' is rather a favourite with Sir Nigel," said I, coldly, for he had a patronizing tone about him that I did not relish. I could laugh with Lady Louisa when she spoke of Sir Nigel as "a queer old droll," or "a dear old thing ;" but I could ill tolerate Berkeley, when he run on in the following fashion—

"He is certainly a trump, Sir Nigel, but droll, as Lady Loftus says—exquisitely droll ! If he—haw—spills salt, no doubt he remembers Judas, and throws a pinch over his left shoulder ; knocks the bottoms out of his eggs, lest the fairies make tugs of 'em ; and—haw, haw—would faint, I suppose, if he dined one of thirteen."



"I am not aware that Sir Nigel has any of the proclivities that you mention," said I ; but, heedless that I was staring at him, Berkeley, with his bland, insipid smile, continued his impertinence.

"Things have—haw—changed so much within the last few years, that these old fellows are actually ignorant of the world they live in ; and the—haw, haw—world goes so fast, that in three years *we* learn more of it, and of life (Gad ! they know nothing of real life), than they did in thirty. As a young man, Sir Nigel was, I have no doubt, a buck in leather breeches and hair powder—haw—drove a Stanhope, perhaps, and wore a spenser, *ultimus Romanorum* ; paid his first visit to London in the old mail coach, with a brace of pistols in his pocket, and the thorough conviction that every second Englishman was a thief."

I listened with growing indignation, for on this man, who quizzed him thus, my poor uncle was lavishing his genuine, old-fashioned Scottish hospitality. I had every disposition to quarrel with Berkeley, and had we been with the regiment, or elsewhere, would undoubtedly have done so ; but in my uncle's house, a *fracas* with a guest, more especially



a brother officer, was the last thing to be thought of.

"You are somewhat unfriendly in your remarks, Mr. Berkeley," said I, haughtily.

"I am—haw—not much of a reader, Norcliff; but I greatly admire a certain writer, who says that 'Friendship means the habit of meeting at dinner—the highest nobility of the soul being his who pays the reckoning!'" replied Berkeley.

"And you always thought that axiom——"

"To be doocid good! Slubber is the only old fellow I ever knew who kept pace with the times."

"Indeed!" said I, with an affected air of perfect unconcern. "I have heard of him—he is said to have proposed to our fair friend in front."

"Ah, may I ask which of them?"

"For Lady Louisa."

"It is very likely—the families are extremely intimate, and I know that she has gone twice to the Continent in Slubber's yacht."

Berkeley said this with a bearing cooler even than mine; but I was aware that the fellow was scanning me closely through his confounded eyeglass.



"His fortune is, I believe, handsome?"

"Magnificent! Sixty thousand a year, at least—haw! His father was a reckless fellow in the days of the Regency, going double-quick to the dogs; but luckily died in time to let the estates go to nurse during the present man's minority. I have heard a good story told of the late Lord Slubber de Gullion, who, having lost a vast sum on the Derby, applied to a well-known broker in town to give him five thousand pounds on my Lady Slubber's jewels.

"‘Number the brilliants,’ said he, ‘and put false stones in their places; she will never know the difference.’

"‘You are mosh too late, my lord,’ replied he of the three six-pounders, with a grin.

"‘Too late! What the devil do you mean, Abraham?’

"‘My Lady Slubbersh shold the diamonds to me three years ago, and these stones are all falsh!’

"So my lord retired, collapsed with rage, to find that a march had been stolen upon him—doocid good, that!"

The snow, I have said, had entirely disappeared, save on the summits of the hills: but, swollen by its melting, the wayside run-



nels bubbled merrily along under the black whins and withered ferns, reflecting the pure blue of the sky overhead. At a place where the road became wider, by a dexterous use of the spurs, I contrived to get my horse between the pads of Cora and Lady Louisa, and so rid myself of Berkeley.

We chatted away pleasantly as we rode on at an easy pace, and ere long, on ascending the higher ground, saw the wide expanse of the Firth of Forth shining with all its ripples under the clear winter sun, with the hills of the Lothians opposite, half shrouded in white vapour.

I would have given all I possessed to have been alone for half an hour with Louisa Loftus, but no such chance or fortune was given me; and though our ride to the ruined castle was, in itself, of small importance, it proved ultimately the means towards an end.

One old woman, wearing one of those peculiar caps which Mary of Gueldres introduced in Scotland, with a black band—the badge of widowhood—over it, appeared at the door of a little thatched cottage, and directed us by a near bridle-path to the ruin, smiling pleasantly as she did so.



"Newton," said Cora, "you remember old Kirsty Jack?"

"Perfectly," said I; "many a luggie of milk I have had from her in past years."

Cora always wondered why people loved her, and why all ranks were so kind to her; but the good little soul was all unaware that her girlish simplicity of manner, her softness of complexion and feature, her winning sweetness of expression and modulation of voice, were so alluring. Had she been so, the charm had, perhaps, vanished, or had become more dangerous by the exercise of coquetry. Often when I looked at her, the idea occurred to me that if I had not been dazzled by Lady Louisa, I should certainly have loved Cora.

The cottage bore a signboard inscribed, "*Christian Jack—a callender\* by the hour or piece*," an announcement which caused some speculation among our English friends; and ignorant alike of its origin and meaning, or what is more probable, affecting to be so, Berkeley laughed immoderately at the word, simply because it was not English.

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\* Literally a mangle, from *calandre*, the French. The term has been common all over Scotland for centuries. In Paris there is a street named the Rue de la Calandre.



“Christian Jack—Presbyterian John, I should suggest,” said he, as we cantered along the bridle-path, in Indian file, Cora at our head, with a firm little hand on her reins, her blue veil and her skirt, and two long black ringlets, floating behind her.

Lady Louisa followed close, her jet hair gathered up in thick and elaborate rolls by the artful fingers of her French *soubrette*; her larger and more voluptuous figure displayed to the utmost advantage by her tight riding-habit; and now, in a few minutes, the old ruin, with all its gaping windows, loomed in sight.

It was not an object of much interest, save to Cora and myself, for it had been the scene of many a picnic and visit in childhood, and having been long the seat of a branch of the Calderwoods now extinct and passed away.

Some strange and quaint legends were connected with it; and Willie Pitblado, old Kirsty at the Loanend, and Cora’s nurse, had told us tales of the old lairds of Piteadie, and their “clenched hand,” which was carved above the gate, that made us feel far from comfortable in the gloomy winter nights, when the vanes creaked overhead, and when the wind that howled down the wooded glen shook



the cawing rooks in their nests, and made the windows of old Calderwood House rattle in their sockets.

The little castle of Piteadie stands on the face of a sloping bank to the westward of Kirkaldy, and a little to the north of Grange, the old barony of the last champion of Mary Queen of Scots; and no doubt it is founded on the basement of a more ancient structure, for in 1530, during the reign of James V., John Wallanche, Laird of Piteadie, was slain near it, in a feudal quarrel, by Sir John Thomson and John Melville of the House of Raith.

The present edifice belongs to the next century, and is a high, narrow, and turreted pile. The windows are small, and have all been thickly grated, and access is given to the various stories by a narrow circular stair.

Within a pediment, half covered with moss, above the arched gateway in the eastern wall, is a mouldered escutcheon of the Calderwoods, bearing a saltire, with three mullets in chief, and a helmet surmounted by a clenched hand—the initials “W. C.” and the date 1686.

Pit is a common prefix to Fifeshire localities. By some antiquarians it is thought to mean Pict; by others a grave.



Cora drew our attention to the clenched hand, and assured us that it grasped something that was meant to represent a lock or ringlet of hair.

Whether this was the case or not, it was impossible for us to say, so much was it covered by the green moss and russet-hued lichens; but she added that "it embodied a quaint little legend, which she would relate to us after dinner."

"And why not now, dear Cora?" said Lady Loftus. "If it is a legend, where so fitting a place as this old ruin, with its roofless walls and shattered windows?"

"We have not time to linger, Louisa," said Cora, pointing with her whip to the great hill of Largo, the cone of which was rapidly becoming hidden by a grey cloud; while another mass of vapour, dense and gloomy, laden with hail or snow, came heavily up from the German Sea, and began to obscure the sun. "See, a wintry blast is coming on, and the sooner we get back to the glen the better. Lead the way, Newton, and we shall follow."

"With pleasure," said I; and giving a farewell glance at the old ruin I might never see again, I turned my horse's head northward, and led the way homeward at a smart



canter ; but we had barely entered Calderwood avenue when the storm of hail and sleet came down in all its fury.

Dinner over, I joined the ladies early in the drawing-room, leaving the M.P. to take the place of Sir Nigel, who was still absent. The heavy curtains, drawn closely over all the oriels, rendered us heedless of the state of the weather without ; and while Binns traversed the room with his coffee-trays, a group was gathered in a corner round Cora, from whom we claimed her story of the old castle we had just visited, and she related it somewhat in the following manner.







## CHAPTER IX.

Is there any room at your head, Emma?

Is there any room at your feet?

Is there any room at your side, Emma,

Where I may sleep so sweet?

There is no room at my side, Robin;

There is no room at my feet.

My bed is dark and narrow now;

But, oh! my sleep is sweet.

OLD BALLAD.

**D**URING the time of King Charles I. and the wars of the great Marquis of Montrose, his captain-general in Scotland—that terrible period when the Civil War was waged in England, and Scotland was rent in twain between the armies of the Covenant and of the Cavaliers—William Calderwood of Piteadie was the lover of Annora Moultray,\* daughter of Symon, the Laird of Seafeld; a tower which stands upon the sea-shore, not far from Kinghorn.

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\* Pronounced "Moutrie" in Scotland.



Both were young and handsome; both were the pride of the district at kirk, market, and merry-meeting; and a time had been fixed for their marriage when the troubles of the Covenant came. Calderwood adhered to the king, and the father of his bride to Cromwell, and the Puritan English.

So the poor lovers were separated; their engagement deemed broken by the parents of Annora, who were dark, gloomy, and stern religionists—true old Whigs of Fife; but on the day before William Calderwood departed to join the great Marquis, who was advancing from the north at the head of his victorious Highlanders, he contrived to have a farewell interview with his mistress at the little ruined chapel of Eglise Marie, which stood, within a few years ago, at Tyrie, in the fields near Grange.

In those days of ecclesiastical tyranny and social espionage, little could escape the parish minister; so the Reverend Elijah Howler promptly apprised Symon of Moultray of his daughter's "foregathering" with the ungodly one at that relic of Popery, the chapel of Mary. They were surprised by the furious father, who exclaimed—

"Sackcloth and ashes! ye graceless limmer,



begone to your spindle, and thou mansworn loon, draw !”

Unsheathing his sword, he rushed upon Calderwood, and would have slain him, notwithstanding the sanctity of the place, but for the interference of his youngest son, Philip, who accompanied him, and parried the threatening sword.

He hurled, however, the deepest and most bitter reproaches upon Calderwood, as “an apostate from the kirk of God ; the adherent of a king who had broken the Covenant ; a leaguer with the mansworn and God-forsaken James Grahame of Montrose, and his murdering gang of Highland Philistines ; the representative of a false brood, among whom no daughter of his should ever mate without a father’s curse resting on her bridal-bed,” with much more to the same purpose.

The young gentleman strove to deprecate his anger ; but, “Away,” the fiery old man resumed ; “hence, ye troubler o’ Israel, who hast hearkened unto the Devil and his prelates ; and beware how ye cross the purpose o’ Symon o’ Seafield, for all the powers o’ hell may fail to baulk my vengeance !”

Under his shaggy brows his eyes glared at Calderwood as he spoke ; and fiercely he drew



his blue bonnet over them, as he hurled his broadsword into its scabbard, struck its basket-hilt significantly, and, grasping his terrified daughter by the wrist, dragged her rudely away.

A farewell glance, mute and despairing, was all that the parted lovers could exchange. As for the injurious reproaches of the irate old man, Willie Calderwood heeded them not. He only mourned in his heart this civil and religious war, that had engendered hate and rancour in the breasts of those at whose board he had long been a welcome guest, and who certainly, at one time, loved him well.

If Symon of Seafeld was rancorous in his animosity, his wife, the Lady Grizel Kirkaldie of Abden, was doubly so. Thus the poor Annora, as she sat by her side, guiding the whirling spindle, or spinning monotonously at her wheel, was compelled, in the intervals of prayer, bible reading, catechizing, and mortification of the body and spirit, to hear the most insulting epithets heaped upon the name of her young and handsome lover, whose figure, as she saw him last at Eglise Marie, with his long, black cavalier plume shading his saddened face, and his scarlet mantle muffling the hilt of the rapier he dared



not to draw on *her* father, seemed ever before her.

To prevent their meeting again, Annora was secluded and carefully watched in the upper storey of Seafeld Tower ; and by her brothers' fowling-pieces many a stray pigeon was shot lest a note might be tied under its wing. The tower forms a striking feature on the sea-beaten shore, midway between Kirkcaldy and Kinghorn-ness. It rests on one side on a mass of red sandstone rock ; on the other it was guarded by a fosse and bridge, the remains of which can yet be traced. To the seaward lie the Vows—some dangerous rocks, on which, on a terrific night in the December of 1800, a great ship of Elbing perished with all her crew.

A roofless and open ruin now, exposed to the blasts which sweep up the Firth from the German Sea, it has long been abandoned to the seamew, the bat, and the owl, or the *ugla*, as it was named of old in Fifeshire.

But the seclusion of Annora was not required ; for, on the very day after the interview which was so roughly interrupted at Eglise Marie, Willie Calderwood, at the head of sixteen troopers, all sturdy " Kailsuppers of Fife," well mounted and accoutred in half



armour—*i.e.*, back, breast, and pot, with sword, pistol, and musketoon—had departed for the king's host, and joined the Marquis of Montrose, whose troops, flushed with their victorious battles at Tippermuir, Alford, Aldearn, and the Brig o' Dee, came pouring over the Ochil mountains, to sack and burn the Castle of Gloom.

Tidings of this advance spread rapidly from the West to the East Neuk of Fife. Great numbers of the Whig lairds repaired to the standard of Baillie, the covenanting general; and among others who drew their swords under him at the battle of Kilsythe, were Symon of Seafield and his three sons.

The latter, fiery and determined youths, had but one object or idea—to single out and slay without mercy William Calderwood, on the first field where swords were crossed.

The parting injunction of their father to Dame Grizel was to leave nothing undone to urge on the marriage of Annora with the Reverend Elijah Howler, a sour-visaged saint, in Geneva cloak and starched bands, with the lappets of a calotte cap covering his grizzled hair and cadaverous cheeks, who, during the troubles that seemed to draw



nearer, had taken up his residence in that gloomy tower, which was half surrounded by the waves.

At another time, had she dared, Annora, who was really a merry-hearted girl, with curling chestnut hair and clear bright hazel eyes, might have laughed at such a lover as this "lean and slippered pantaloan," who now, in scriptural phraseology, culled chiefly out of the Old Testament, besought her to share his heart and fortunes ; but the dangers that overhung her affianced husband and her father's household, whichever side conquered in the great battle that was impending, and the monotony of her own existence, which was varied only by the long nasal prayers and quavering psalmody in which the inhabitants of the tower (chiefly old women now) lamented the iniquity of mankind, and "warsled wi' the Lord"—prayers and psalms that mingled with the cries of the sea-birds, and the boom of the ocean on the rocks around the tower, all tended to crush her naturally joyous spirit, and corrode her young heart with artificial gloom.

She was frequently discovered in tears by Dame Grizel ; and then sharp, indeed, was the rebuke that fell upon her.



"Oh, mother dear," she would exclaim, "pity me!"

"Silence! bairn, and greet nae mair," the lady would reply, sharply. "Hearken to the voice of ane that loves ye; but not after the fashion of this miserable world—the Reverend Elijah. Bethink ye on whom your hellicate cavalier may e'en the now be showering his ungodly kisses. Bethink ye—

That auld love is cauld love,  
But new love is true love.

Elijah loves ye weel, and, though the man be auld, his love is new and true."

Annora shuddered with anger and grief; while her stern mother, giving additional impetus to her spinning-wheel, as she sat in the ingle by the hall fire, eyed her grimly askance, and muttered—

"Calderwood, forsooth! There never cam' faith or truth frae one o' the line o' Piteadie since the cardinal was stickit by Norman Leslie, a hunder years ago. Are ye a daughter o' mine and o' Symon Moultray, and yet are hen-hearted enough to renounce God and His covenanted kirk, and adhere to bishops and curates?—to seek the fushionless milk that cometh frae a yeld bosom, sic as the kirk o' prelacy hath? Fie! and awa' wi' ye!"



"I forsake nae kirk, mother," urged the poor lassie; "but I will adhere to my Willie. Falsehood never came o' his line, and the Calderwoods are auld as the three trees o' Dysart."

"And shall be shunned like the de'il o' Dysart," replied her mother, beating the hearthstone with the high heel of her red shoe.

The cornfields were yellowing in the fertile Howe of Fife, and the woods were still green in all their summer beauty, when, about Old Lammas-day, in the year 1645, there went a vague whisper through the land—none knew how—that a bloody battle had been fought somewhere about the Fells of Campsie; that many a helmet had been cloven, many a blue-bonneted head lay on the purple heather; and that many a whig Fife laird had perished with his followers.

Sorely troubled in spirit, the Reverend Elijah Howler took his ivory-handled staff, adjusted his bands and his beaver above his calotte cap, and, in quest of sure tidings, set forth to Kinghorn, at the market-cross of which he had heard the terrible intelligence, that the sword of the ungodly had triumphed—that Montrose had burst into the lowlands



like a roaring lion, seeking whom he might devour; and all along the Burntisland Road Elijah saw the Fife troopers come spurring, with buff-coats slashed, and harness battered, bloody, dusty, and having all the signs of discomfiture and fear.

Ere long he learned that Symon of Seafield and his three sons were in safety (thanks to their horses' heels); but that the Marquis of Montrose had encountered the army of the covenant on the field of Kilsythe, where he had gained a great and terrible victory, slaying, by the edge of the sword, six thousand soldiers; that the killing covered fourteen miles Scottish—*i.e.*, twenty-five miles English—and that on the men of the Fifeshire regiments had fallen the most serious slaughter.

In fact, very few of them ever returned, for nearly all perished, and the terror of that day is still a tradition in many a hamlet of Fife.

Annora felt joy in her heart when her father and brothers returned; yet it was not without alloy, for where was he whom she had sworn to love, and a lock of whose dark brown hair she wore in secret next her heart?

Lying cold and mangled, perhaps, on the field of Kilsythe!



There one of her father's men, Roger of Tyrie, had found a relic of terrible import. It was a kilmaur's whittle; the blade was of fine steel, hafted with tortoiseshell, adorned with silver circlets. It was graven with the Calderwood arms, and spotted with blood; but whose blood?

Symon and his sons came home to the tower crestfallen, and with hearts full of bitterness. Symon's steel cap, with its triple bars, had been struck from his head by the marquis's own sword, and now he wore a broad bonnet, with the blue cockade of the Covenant streaming from it, over his left ear.

Long, lank, and grizzled, his hair flowed over his shoulders upon his gorget and cuirass. His complexion was sallow, his expression fierce, as he trod, spurred and jack-booted, into the vaulted hall of the tower, and grimly kissed Dame Grizel on the forehead.

"The godless Philistines have been victorious, and yet ye have a' come back to me without scratch or scar," she exclaimed, with Spartan bitterness.

"Even sae, gudewife—even sae; but for that day at Kilsythe vengeance shall yet be ours!"

"Yea, verily," groaned Elijah Howler; "for



it was a day of woe, a day of 'wailing and of loud lamentation,' as the weeping of Jazer, when the lords of the heathen had broken down her principal plants; and as the mourning of Rachel, who wept for her children, and would not be comforted."

"Get me a stoup o' ale," said Symon, with something like an oath, as he flung aside his sword and gauntlets. "And *thou*, minion, after that day o' bluid, will ye cling yet to that son o' Belial, Willie Calderwood?" asked Symon, sternly, of his shrinking daughter. "Thrice I saw him in the charge, and covered him ilk time wi' my petronel; but lead availed not, and I had na about me a siller coin that fitted the muzzle of my weapon, else he had been i' the mools this nicht. But horse and spear, lads!" he added, turning to his sons. "Ere we sleep, we shall ride by Grange, and rook out Calderwood Glen wi' a flaming lunt!"

So Symon and his sons had a deep carouse in the old hall with their troopers, all sturdy "Kailsuppers of Fife," drinking confusion to their enemies.

Now it is an open ruin; then it was crossed by a great oak beam, whereon hung spears and bows. On the walls were the horns of many a buck from Falkland Woods.



Many an oak almerie and meal-girnel stood round ; and rows of pots and pans, pell-mell among helmets and corslets, swords and bucklers, spits and branders, made up the decorations and the furniture ; while a great fire of wood and coal from “ my Lord Sinclair’s heughs ” blazed day and night on the stone hearth, making the hall to seem in some places all red and quivering in red light, or sunk in sable shadow elsewhere.

It had but two chairs—one for the laird, and one for the lady—for such was then the etiquette in Scotland ; thus even the Reverend Elijah had to accommodate his lean shanks on a three-legged creepie.

Dogs of various kinds were always basking before the fire on dun deer-skins ; but the chief of them was Symon’s great Scottish staghound, which was exactly of the breed and appearance described in the old rhyme—

Headèd lyke a snake,  
Neckèd lyke a drake,  
Footèd lyke a catte,  
Taylèd lyke a ratte,  
Sydèd lyke a team,  
Chynèd lyke a beam.

On that night Symon and his sons, with Roger of Tyrie, and other followers, crossed the hill to Piteadie, and sacked and set on



fire the dwelling of the Calderwoods, who, as adherents of the king, were deemed beyond the pale of the law by the Scottish government.

In the murk midnight, from the tower head of Seafield, the heart-stricken Annora could see the red flames of rapine wavering in the sky, beyond the woods of Grange, in the direction where she knew so well her absent lover's dwelling stood; and when her father and brothers came galloping down the brae, and clattering over the drawbridge of the tower, they laughingly boasted that, in passing Eglise Marie, they had defaced the family tomb of the Calderwoods, and overthrown the throchstone that marked where Willie's mother lay, under the shadow of an old yew tree.

"The nest is gane, Grizy," said Symon, grimly, as he unclasped his corslet, and hung his sword on the wall; "the nest is scoutered weel, and the black rooks can return to it nae mair."

"Would that we could lure the tassel to the gosshawk again," said Lady Grizel, with a dark glance at her daughter.

"For what end, gudewife?" asked Symon, with surprise.



“To make him a tassel on the dule-tree there without,” was the cruel response.

Annora felt as if her heart were bursting ; it seemed so strange and unnatural that all this savage hate should exist because her poor Willie adhered to the king rather than to the kirk.

A few weeks passed, and there was loud revelry, and many a stoup and black-jack of ale and usquebaugh drained joyfully in Sea-field, for tidings came of the total rout of the Scottish Cavaliers at Philiphaugh, and of the flight of the great marquis and all his followers none knew whither ; but rumour said to High Germanie.

Had Willie Calderwood escaped ? asked Annora, in her trembling heart ; or had he fallen at the Slainmanslee, where the Covenanters butchered all who fell into their hands, even mothers with their babes that hung at their breasts ?

And these acts, and many other such, did her new lover justify by many a savage quotation from the wars of the Jews in the days of old. Now the kirk was triumphant, and, Judas-like, had sold its king, as old Peter Heylin said, even as it would have sold its Saviour could it have found a purchaser.



Winter came on—a cold and bitter one—the soft spray of the sea froze on the tower windows of Seafield, while the moss and the grass grew together on the hearthstones of Piteadie, and the crows had built their nests in the old chimneys and nooks of the ruined castle.

Hard strove father and mother with Annora;  
but—

If a lass won't change her mind,  
Nobody can make her.

The Reverend Elijah Howler was a happy man in one sense; the cause of his beloved kirk was triumphant, though Cromwell's Puritans, who had succeeded the Cavaliers of Montrose as antagonists, bade fair to become sore troublers of Israel; and loud were the lamentations when, by sound of trumpet, the English sectaries warned the General Assembly to begone from Edinburgh, and to assemble no more. Yet the Reverend Elijah was unhappy in another sense. Annora heard his pious love-making with averted ear, and he might as well have poured forth his texts, his dreary talk, and intoned homilies, to the waves that beat at the rocky basement of the tower—at once Annora's prison and her home.



Meanwhile, she grew pale, and thin, and sickly. Her younger brother, Philip, pitied her in his heart, and, after making inquiries, learned that Willie Calderwood was now in France, where he had been wounded in a duel by the Abbé Gondy, but had become his friend, and now adhered to him when he had become famous as the Cardinal de Retz; and, as such, served and defended him in the wars of the Fronde, with a hundred other cavaliers of Montrose.

“Oh, waly, waly, my mother dear!” she exclaimed, using the bitterest old Scottish exclamation of grief, as she threw herself on the bosom of the unflinching Lady Grizel. “Pity me—pity me, for none love me here, and Willie is far far awa’ in France owre the sea.”

“A’ the better, bairn—a’ the better.”

“But I may never see him mair!”

“A’ the better still, bairn.”

“Oh, mother dear,” urged the weeping girl, “dinna say sae; ye’ll rive my puir heart in twain amang ye. And this Fronde, and these Frondeurs, what is *it*, what are *they*?”

“What would it be but some Papist devilry, or a Calderwood wadna be in the middle o’t?” was the angry response.



Poor Annora knew not what to think, for there were no newspapers in those days, and rumours of events in distant lands came vaguely by chance travellers, and at long intervals. Lothian and Fife were almost farther apart in those days than Scotland and France are now, in the matters of news and travel.

She felt like Juliet in the feud between their families—

'Tis but thy *name* that is my enemy;—  
Though art thyself though, not a Montague.  
What's Montague? It is not hand or foot,  
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part  
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!  
What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet.  
——Doff thy name;  
And for that name, which is no part of thee,  
Take all myself.

Even as water dropping on a granite rock will wear that rock away in course of time, so, by the systematic tyranny of her parents, and by their reiterated assurances, and even forged proofs, that Willie Calderwood had fallen, sword in hand, at the battle of the Barricades, was Annora worn and wearied into a state of acquiescence, in which she accepted Mr. Elijah Howler as her husband.

This was the climax of years of a gloomy,



sabbatical life, during which the Judaical rigidity of religious observance made Sunday a periodical horror, and Seafeld tower a daily hell.

So they were married, and he removed her from the tower to the adjacent manse, from the more cheerful and ungrated windows of which she could see in the distance the roofless turrets and open walls of Piteadie, where the crows clustered and flapped their black wings, for the ruin had become a veritable rookery.

The king was dead; he had perished on the scaffold, and Scotland, under Cromwell and the false Argyle, was quiet, as we are told in that poetical romance by Macaulay, entitled "The History of England."

On a Sunday in summer, in the year of Glencairn's rising in the north for King Charles II., Annora sat in the Kirk of Calderwood about the beginning of sermon. The reverend Elijah, with straight, lank hair, and upturned eyes, Geneva bands and gown, after a glance at the dark oak pew where his young bride and victim sat, like the spectre of her former self, so pale, so crushed and heart-broken, twice repeated, in a dreary and quavering tone, the text upon which he was about



to preach, with special reference to the rising in the north, inviting all sons of the Kirk to arm against the loyal Highlanders—

*“ He saith among the trumpets, Ha ! ha ! and he smelleth the battle after off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting ! He is not affrighted, neither turneth he back from the sword ; he goeth on to meet the armed men.”\**

Having given this warlike text, he adjusted his cloak, and turned the sand-glass, which, according to the fashion of those days, stood on the reading-desk. The rustle of bible leaves, as of those that lie strewn in autumn when gently stirred by the wind, passed through all the church ; but from Annora’s trembling and wan fingers, her bible fell heavily to the ground.

At that moment a gaily-dressed young man, with the white rose in his plumed hat and on his laced mantle, with slashed doublet and boots, as he passed slowly up the aisle—the observed of all observers—as such cavalier fripperies were supposed to have passed away with Montrose and the king, stooped, and presented her with the fallen book.

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\* Job xxxix.



Their haggard eyes met. He was pale even as death. A great wound, a sword-cut that traversed his face like a livid streak, in healing had distorted the features ; but like a glance of lightning that flashed into her soul, she recognised Willie Calderwood !

She would have shrieked, but lacked the power ; a little sigh could only escape her, and so she swooned away.

There was a great commotion in the village kirk. She was borne forth into the air, and laid for a time upon a throchstane, or altar tomb, and was then conveyed to the manse, where she remained long as one on the verge of madness or the grave. The face of Willie, so sweet, so sad and earnest, but, alas ! so sorely distorted, seemed ever before her, together with his gallant air and courtly bearing, all of which were so different from those of the sour-featured Whigs by whom she was surrounded.

But she was informed by her younger brother, Philip, that she should never see that face or bearing more, as her lover had come home, sorely wounded and broken in health, not to seek vengeance on her or hers, but only to die among his kinsmen, the Calderwoods of the Glen ; and that he had died there, three



days after their meeting in the kirk ; and was buried at Eglise Marie, in the tomb of the lairds of Piteadie.

It was in one of the last evenings of autumn, when after hearing this sorrowful narrative, and with it the knowledge that the only heart that ever truly loved her was cold in the grave, that Annora—in the craving for solitude and to be alone, left the old ivy-covered manse, and passing through the garden, issued into the glebe—a spacious park, surrounded by venerable trees—and seating herself upon a moss-grown stile, strove to think calmly, if possible, and pray.

Resplendent in gold and purple, the sky threw out in strong contour the summits of the Lomonds, from which the last rays of sunset had faded ; and where she sat alone. The darkness had almost set in, the woods were so leafy and dense ; yet in some places the twilight was liquid and clear. The trees were already yellowing fast, and the sear and russet leaves that had fallen before the strong gales that swept through the Howe, or great midland valley of Fife, were whirling about the place where she sat, as if to remind her that the year was dying.

Often in happier times had she wandered



here with Willie, and the bark of more than one tree there bore their names and initials cut by his knife or dagger. The woodcock was seeking his nest in the hedges, and the snipe and the wild coot were among the reeds and rushes of the loch and burn ; and Annora, as she gazed around her, thought sadly that it was the autumn of a year of married misery, and the winter of her aching heart.

Suddenly some mysterious impulse — for there was no sound—but the sense of something being nigh, made her look round, and then a start, a shudder, convulsed her, rooting her to the spot ; for there by the stile whereon she sat was Willie Calderwood, looking just as she had seen him last, in his cavalier dress, with plumed beaver and white cockade, long rapier and short velvet mantle ; but his features, when viewed by the calm, clear twilight, seemed paler, his eyes sadder, and the sword wound on his cheek more livid and dark.

He was not dead—he lived yet, and her brother Philip had deceived her !

She made a start forward, and then drew back, withheld by an impulse of terror, and holding up her poor thin hands deprecatingly, faltered out—



"Oh! come not nigh me, Willie. I am a wedded wife."

"And false to me, Annora. Is it not so?" he asked, with a voice that thrilled through her.

She wept, and laid her hands upon her crushed heart, while Willie's sad eyes, that had a glare in them, caused doubtless by his wound, seemed to pierce her soul; they seemed so bright, so earnest, and beseeching in the autumn twilight.

"They told you I was false to you, or slain in France, and you believed them?"

"I did, Willie," she sobbed, as she covered her face.

"I have lain on many a field, lassie, where the rain of heaven and the wind of night swept over me—fields where the living could scarce be kenned frae the dead, yet I was never slain."

"But, oh," she urged, "Willie, never, never will ye ken——"

"I ken a'! They told you that I was dead, too, and graved in yonder kirk."

"They did, Willie dear—they did."

"Yet I am here before you. I came home to wed you, lassie, and to join my Lord Glencairn in the north, and to fight against



this accursed Cromwell and his Puritans, but it maunna be," he added, sadly, in a hollow tone.

"Oh, leave me, Willie, leave me. If you should be seen wi' me——"

"Seen!" he exclaimed, with a bitter laugh.

"Oh, leave me; for what seek ye here?"

"But a lock o' your bonnie hair, lassie—a lock to lay beside my heart."

Her scissors were at the chatelaine that dangled from her girdle; she glanced fearfully at the windows of the manse, where lights were beginning to glimmer; but undoing her hair, she cut a long and ripply tress, and handed it to Willie. As she drew near, the expression of his eyes again froze her blood, they seemed so sadly earnest and glazed; and as his fingers closed upon the coveted tress, and touched hers, they felt icy cold and clammy, like those of a corpse.

Then a shriek of terror burst from her, and falling on the grass, she became senseless, and oblivious of everything.

For days after this she raved of her meeting with Willie Calderwood, and of the lock of hair she had given him. Some thought her mind wandered; but others pointed significantly to the facts that her scissors had been



found by her side, and to where a large tress had been certainly cut from her left temple.

The young laird of Piteadie was assuredly dead, and buried among his kindred in St. Mary's Chapel ; but the age was one of superstition, of wraiths, and omens ; and people whispered, and shook their heads, and knew not what to think, save that she must have seen a spectre.

Ere a week elapsed, Annora died quietly in her mother's arms, forgiving and blessing her ; but adhering to the story of the gift to her dead lover. So strong at last grew the excitement in the neighbourhood that some began to aver that he was not dead at all, but was leading a troop of horse, under Glencairn, in the north.

Even those who had seen the funeral cortège issue from the House of the Glen were so sceptical on the subject, that the tomb was opened by order of the next heir, and there, sure enough, was the body of Willie Calderwood ; but the leaden cerements were rent from top to bottom, the grave-clothes were all in disorder, and in the right hand was clenched a long and silky tress of Annora's hair !\*

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\* The plough has recently uprooted the last stones of this old chapel ; but its name, corrupted into "Legsmalie," is borne by the field where it stood.



How it came there none could say, though many averred it had been buried with him at his own request, and was the gift of other years ; but the next heir, his nephew, William Calderwood, whose initials we may see above the eastern gate of the old fortalice, when he repaired it in 1686, in lieu of the palm branch of his name, placed above the helmet an arm and clenched hand, which holds a lock of hair—the same crest we all saw this morning.

From that time the Moultrays of Seafield never prospered. The last of the family was killed during the insurrection of 1715. Their line passed away. It was long represented by the Moultrays of Rescobie, also now extinct, and their tower is a crumbling ruin by the sea-shore.

\* \* \* \* \*

Such was Cora's strange story, to which we all, myself included, listened with attention, though, sooth to say, I had heard it frequently before. Berkeley declared it to be "doocid good, but doocid queer."

In another land I was yet to hear a story still more gloomy and improbable than this—a story to be related in its place, and in some points not unlike the legend of the clenched hand.

While Cora had been rehearsing her gloomy



story of the two ruined towers, my eyes had scarcely ever wandered from Louisa Loftus, who, with Miss Wilford and I, was seated in the same flirting, or triple tête-à-tête chair, and who, on this night, was in all the pride of her calm, pale, aristocratic beauty.

She was in the zenith of her charms ; her figure, finely rounded, was full—almost voluptuous ; her features were remarkably expressive to be so regular ; and her eyes and glorious hair were wondrously dark when contrasted with the pure whiteness of her skin.

Seated under the brilliant crystal gaselier, the fine contour of her head, and the exquisite proportions of her bare shoulders and neck, on which a circlet of brilliants sparkled, were seen to perfection, and I felt bewildered while I watched her. Thus, I fear, Miss Wilford, in whose blue eyes a mischievous expression was twinkling, did not find me very entertaining company.

Down that fair neck a long black ringlet wandered, as if to allure, and at times it almost touched, my hand. Intoxicated by her beauty and close vicinity, I determined to do something to express my passion, even if I should do it—miserable timidity and subterfuge—under cover of a jest—a mockery.



Tremulously, between my fingers, unnoticed by others, I took the stray ringlet, and whispered in her ears—

“A strange story, that of my cousin’s, Lady Louisa.”

“And the lock of hair! such a terrible idea!” said she, shuddering, while her white shoulders and brilliants shone in the light together.

“Does it terrify you?”

“More than it gratifies me.”

“As the chances are that I may be killed and buried in the Crimea, will—will you give me *this* to lie in the trenches with me?” said I, curling the soft ringlet round my finger, with mock gallantry, while my heart beat wildly with hope and expectation.

She turned her dark, full eyes to mine, with an expression of mingled surprise and sweetness.

“Take it *now*, Mr. Norcliff, for heaven’s sake, rather than come for it, as William Calderwood came,” said the sprightly Miss Wilford, taking a pair of scissors from a gueridon table that stood close by; and ere Lady Loftus could speak, the dark ringlet was cut off, and consigned to my pocket-book, while my lips trembled as I whispered my thanks, and laughingly said—



“What says Pope?”

The meeting points the sacred hair dissever,  
From the fair head for ever, and for ever.”

“This is all very well, Mr. Norcliff,” said she, laughing behind her fan; “but I cannot submit to be shorn in jest, and shall insist on having that lock of hair from you to-morrow.”

She had a lovely smile in her dark eyes, and a half-pout on her beautiful lip; but Cora—I know not why—looked on me sadly, and shook her pretty head with an air of warning, that seemed as much as to say, I had erred in my gallantry, if not in my generalship.

That night my heart beat happily; I went to sleep with that jetty tress beneath my pillow; thus, for me, Cousin Cora had not in vain told her quaint old legend of “The Clenched Hand.”







## CHAPTER X.

I loved—yes. Ah, let me tell  
The fatal charms by which I fell !  
Her form the tam'risk's waving shoot,  
Her breast the cocoa's youngling fruit.

Her eyes were jetty, jet her hair,  
O'ershadowing face like lotus fair ;  
Her lips were rubies, guarding flowers  
Of jasmine, dimmed with vernal showers.

STONE TALK.

**T**HE next day was to see a crisis in my fate which I could not have anticipated, combined with the narrow escape from mutilation, or death, of more than one of our pleasant party assembled at the Glen.

With all the intensity of my soul, I wished to learn my chances of success with the brilliant Lady Louisa, yet trembled to make the essay.

Why, or how was this ?

Timid and irresolute, fearing to know the



best or the worst from the lips of a mere girl, I asked of myself was it I—I, who, at the bombardment of Rangoon, at the storming of the Dagon Pagoda, and in the night attack on Frome, had feared neither the bullets or poisoned arrows of the two-sworded barbarians whom it was our ill-luck to encounter in those tropical regions; I, who, without fear or flinching, was now ready to meet the Russians in the Crimea, or anywhere else; was it I that could not muster hardihood to reveal the emotions, the honourable love, of an honest heart? It was; and, at times, I felt inclined to utter a malison on that which General Napier so truly and happily termed, “the cold shade of aristocracy;” for that it was which chilled and baffled me, and made me feel as great a radical as John Bright or Joe Sturge.

In the drawing-room the first who met me was my Cousin Cora, looking pale, but bright-eyed, with her pure complexion, and in all her morning prettiness.

“Lady Loftus, I presume, has not appeared yet?” said I.

“It is always Lady Loftus with you, Cousin Newton,” said she, pettishly, “though you came here to see papa and *me*. What have



you done with that celebrated lock of hair ?  
Put it in the fire, eh ?”

“ In the fire, Cora ! It is here in my pocket-book.”

“ Doubtless you are very proud of it ?”

“ I cannot but be, Cora,” said I, taking her hands in mine, and drawing her into the recess of an oriel window ; “ and she is herself so proud and reserved. I am sure that she knows what you have seen, Cora ; at least, what my uncle says you have detected, that—that——”

“ What, Newton ? How rambling and mysterious you are !”

“ That I love her.”

“ You are sure she knows this ?” asked Cora.

“ Yes, my dear cousin ; it is impossible that the regard with which she has inspired me could fail to be known, seen, or felt by her— I mean that it must have been apparent to her, by a thousand mute indications, since we first met in England. It is so to you ; is it not ?”

“ Ye—yes,” replied Cora, with her face averted, for no doubt she was smiling at my earnest simplicity.

“ Do you think she would tolerate atten-



tions that were valueless, or would trifle with me?"

"I cannot say."

"But you are her particular friend. Oh, Cora, be mine too!"

"What on earth do you mean?" asked Cora, showing me still only her pretty profile; "you cannot wish *me* to propose to her for you?"

"No; but you hide your sweet face, Cora. You are laughing at me!"

"Oh, no, I am not laughing," replied Cora, in a rich, low tremulous voice. "Heaven knows, Newton, how far my thoughts are removed from laughter."

"And—what is this, Cora dear? Your eyes are full of tears!"

"Are they?" she exclaimed angrily, as she withdrew her hands from mine.

"Yes—ah, I see it all," said I, bitterly; "you know Lady Louisa's heart better than I do, and deem my love for her a hopeless one."

"It is not so," replied Cora, while her cheek flushed, and, though her long lashes drooped, an air of hauteur stole over her usually gentle and lovable bearing. "I know nothing of the matter. Search her heart for yourself;



assist you I cannot ; and what is more, Newton Norcliff," she added haughtily, " I will not !"

" Cora !" I exclaimed, with surprise ; " but be it so. Myself then must be my own advocate, and if my love for Lady Louisa——"

What I was about to add, or how I meant to finish the sentence, I know not, for at that moment she approached, with her calm, somewhat conventional, but beautiful smile, to kiss Cora, and present her hand to me. The rest of our party rapidly assembled.

Had she heard the *last* words of my interrupted speech ? I almost feared, or rather hoped, that she had.

" This, I find, is to be the day of another expedition, Mr. Norcliff," she observed.

" So it appears. We are to see the Fife-shire hounds throw off at Largo House ; and afterwards we are to drive home by a circuit, through half the country, to let Lady Chillingham see the scenery."

" In a January day !" drawled Berkeley.  
" Do we—aw—start before tiffin ?"

" If by that you mean luncheon, I say after it, decidedly," said Lady Chillingham, in her cool, determined manner, which few—the earl, her husband, especially—could gainsay. " I have to write to my Lord Slubber and others."



"Pardon me, my dear Lady Chillingham, but this arrangement is impossible," said my uncle; "we must leave this in time to see the hounds throw off."

"And the hour, Sir Nigel?"

"Sharp twelve. Binns will take luncheon for us in the boot of the drag. Berkeley, you, I believe, are to don the pink, and ride with me. I shall cross the country to-night, but not in my official capacity, as I have not yet assumed all the duties appertaining to the honourable office of the master of the Fifeshire hounds. And now to breakfast. Lady Chillingham, permit me—your hand, and we shall lead the way."

"When I do take the hunting of the county into my own care," resumed my uncle, "I shall show you as noble a pack as ever drew cover; ay, dogs as smart as ever had their tails running after them, even before cub-hunting begins next season; and so compactly shall they go, that a tablecloth might cover them all when in full cry."

"By that time, uncle, I shall be testing the mettle of the Russian cavalry; but my heart will be with you all here in Calderwood Glen."

Lady Louisa's eyes were upon me as I said this; their expression was unfathomable, so I



was fain to construe it into something sympathetic or of interest in my fate.

The day was clear and beautiful; the air serene, though cold, and the swelling outlines of the green and verdant hills were sharply defined against the blue of the sky, where a few fleecy clouds were floating on the west wind.

Our party lost no time in preparing for the expedition of the day, and, ere long, the vehicles, the horses, and even the ladies, were all in marching order. I had too much tact to attempt to engross Lady Loftus at the beginning of the day; but resolved, as she was to be with "mamma" in the drag, to become one of its occupants when returning home, if I could achieve nothing better.

My man Pitblado, and other grooms, brought forth the saddled horses, and my uncle appeared in a red hunting-coat, boots and tops, with whip and cap complete, his cheek glowing with health and pleasure, and his eyes sparkling as if he were again sixteen.

"By the way, Newton," said he, slapping his boot-tops, "that lancer fellow of yours——"

"Willie Pitblado, my servant?"

"Yes; well, he has tumbled Lady Chillingham's French soubrette about, as if he had



known her from infancy ; and what suits the meridian of Maidstone barracks wont do at Calderwood Glen, so tell him. And now, Mr. Berkeley, here are Dunearn, Saline, and Splinter-bar. You can have your choice of cavalry ; but shorten your stirrups. I always take the leathers up two holes for hunting."

"Aw—haw, thanks," drawled this Dumdreary (whose fashionable hunting suit, in cut and brilliancy of colour, quite eclipsed the well-worn costume of the jolly old baronet), as he proceeded leisurely to examine the bridle and girths, observing the while to me—

"Louisa looks well this morning."

"Louisa !" I repeated, with astonishment ; "is it the mare—her name is Saline, so called from some hills in Fife—or whom on earth do you mean ?"

"Why, Lady Loftus, to be sure."

"And you speak of her thus freely or familiarly ?"

"Ya—haw—yes."

"By Jove, you surprise me !"

"By what, eh ?"

"Your perfect assurance, to be plain with you, my friend."

"Don't deem it such, my dear fellow, though it is doocid dangerous when one comes



to speak of so charming a girl by her Christian name ; it shows how a fellow thinks or *feels*, and all that sort of thing ; do you understand ?”

“ Not very clearly ; but consider, Berkeley, what you are about, and don’t make a deuced fool of yourself,” said I, with undisguised anger.

“ No danger of that ; but—haw—surely you are not spooney in that quarter yourself ? Eh—haw—if I thought so, curse me if I wouldn’t draw stakes, and hedge. You know that I like you, Newton ; and your old uncle, Sir Nigel, is a doocid good kind of fellow—a trump, in fact,” he added, while lightly vaulting into his saddle, and gathering up his reins, but eyeing me like a lynx, through his glass, as if to read my most secret thoughts.

Disdaining to reply, I drew haughtily back.

“ So-ho,” said my uncle, who was now mounted. “ I know that grey mare, Saline, well ; so, Mr. Berkeley, by gently feeling her mouth, and grinding her up to the requisite pitch of speed, she’ll soon leave the whole field behind her.”

Our party was numerous ; including my uncle’s guests, some thirty ladies and gentlemen were about to start from the Glen. We



were well off in conveyances. There was the great old family carriage, cosily stuffed, easily hung, pannelled and escutcheoned, with rumble and hammercloth ; there was a stately drag of a dark chocolate colour, with red wheels, and a glorious team of greys ; a dashing waggonette and tandem, with two brilliant bays, that, in the shafts, were well worth three hundred pounds each ; and there was a dainty little phaeton, in which the general was to drive Cora and Miss Wilford, drawn by two of the sleekest, roundest, and sauciest little ponies that ever came out of Ultima Thule.

I was to drive the drag to the meet ; and, after the hunt, Berkeley was to meet us at a certain point on the Cupar Road, and drive the vehicle home, if I felt disposed to yield the ribbons to him, which I had quite resolved to do.

Of the noise and excitement, the spurring, yelping, and hallooing, sounding of horns, and cracking of whips ; the greetings of rough and boisterous country friends ; the criticisms that ensued on dogs, horses, and harness ; of how the cover was drawn, and the fox broke away ; how huntsmen and hounds followed “owre bank, bush, and scaur,” as if the devil had got loose, and life depended on his instant re-



capture, and of all the incidents of the hunt, I need give no relation here.

The afternoon was well-nigh spent before we saw the last of my uncle's companions ; and to the luncheon provided by Mr. Binns we had done full justice, the roof of the drag being covered by a white cloth, and improvised as a dining-table, whereon was spread a *déjeûner* service of splendid Wedgwood ware, the champagne sparkling in the sun, and the long glasses of potash and Beaujolais foaming up for the thirsty ; and Largo Law, a green and conical hill, verdant to its summit a thousand feet above the waters of the bay, was throwing its shadow to the eastward, when we made arrangements for our return ; and, thanks to dear Cora's tact and management, rather than my own—for timidity and doubt embarrassed me—I contrived to get Lady Louisa into the tandem. After which, by giving a hint to Willie Pitblado, he managed to set the horses kicking and plunging in such an alarming fashion that it was necessary to give them their heads for a little way, as if to soothe their ruffled tempers, just as he adroitly had got into the back seat.

Lady Chillingham, the M.P., the Misses Spittal, and Rammerscales were all bundled



into the drag ; others were on the roof, great-coated or well-shawled, for a cool drive home, and the whole party set out for the Glen, *viâ* Clatto and Collessie, a twenty-five miles' drive.

It was past the hour of three before all was packed up and we were all ready to leave Largo. The grave old butler, Binns, looked at his watch, and said—

“ Mr. Newton, you know the route we go by.”

“ Yes ; round by Dunnikier Law.”

“ That is the road Sir Nigel wished us to drive ; but you'll require to use your whip if we are to be home before dark.”

“ Never fear for that, Binns,” said I, while leading the way in the tandem with Lady Louisa beside me, and no attendant or other companion, save Willie Pitblado, who had or had not ears and eyes just as occasion required, Mamma Chillingham believing the while that she was with other ladies in the close carriage.

“ Keep a tight hand on the leader, sir,” whispered Pitblado ; “ she's a blood mare, rather fresh from the stall, and over-corned a bit.”

“ She is hard-mouthed,” said I, “ and pulls like the devil.”



“As for the wheeler, I think the splinter-bar is too low, and she kicks and shies at it ; but the breeching is as short as we could make it. Keep a sharp look out on both, sir,” said he, warningly, and then relapsed into apparent immobility.

For the *first* time since our introduction had I been alone with Lady Louisa—I say alone, for I did not count on my servant, who seemed wholly intent on looking anywhere but at us, and chiefly behind, as if to see how soon we should distance the four-in-hand drag and the rest of our party.

The vehicle we occupied was a hybrid affair, which my uncle frequently used, half gig and half dog-cart, four-wheeled, with Collinge’s patent axles, lever drag, and silver lamps, smart, strong, light, and decidedly “bang up.”

We went along at a spanking pace. My fair companion was chatty and delightfully gay ; her dark eyes were unusually bright, for the whole events of the day, and the lunch *al fresco*, had all tended to exhilaration of spirits.

She forgot what her rigid, aristocratic, and match-making mamma might think of her being alone thus with a young subaltern of



lancers ; but though her white ermine boa was not paler than her complexion usually was, she had now a tinge, almost a flush, on her soft, rounded cheek that made her radiantly beautiful, and I felt that now or never was the time to address her in the language of love.

I knew that the crisis had come ; but how was I to approach it ?







## CHAPTER XI.

The rocky guardians of the clime  
Frown on me, as they menaced death ;  
While echoing still in measured time  
The gallop of my courser's hoof,  
They hoarsely bid me stand aloof.  
Where goest thou, madman ? Where no shade  
Of tree or tent shall screen thy head.  
Still on—still on ; I turn my eyes—  
The cliffs no longer mock the skies ;  
The peaks shrink back, and hide their brow,  
Each other's lofty peaks below.

FROM THE POETRY OF MICKIEWICZ.



S if inspired by fortune, or my  
good genius, Lady Louisa began  
thus, in a low voice—

“ By the way, Mr. Norcliff,  
you were to have shown me the  
house in which Alexander Selkirk—or Robin-  
son Crusoe—was born in 1676, I think you  
said ?”

“ Oh ; it is only a cottage, consisting of one  
storey and a garret ; but the next time we  
come to Largo, I shall show you his flip-can,  
musket, and a lock of his hair.”



"Ah, that reminds me, Mr. Norcliff, that you must return to me the lock of hair which you obtained when inspired with romance by Miss Calderwood's legend last night."

"Lady Louisa, I implore your permission to retain it," said I, in a low voice.

"To what end, or for what reason?" she asked, with a furtive smile.

"I am going far, far away, and it will serve as a memento of many happy days, and of one whom I shall never cease to remember, but with——"

"Why, you don't mean to say that—that you are serious?" she asked, in a voice that betrayed emotion, while my heart rose to my trembling lips, and I turned to gaze upon her with an unmistakable expression of love and tenderness, which made her colour come and go visibly.

Reassuring herself, she began to smile.

"Perhaps your creed is a soldier's one?" said she, with a little convulsive laugh, as she tied her veil under her chin.

"A soldier's! I hope so; but in what sense do you mean?"

"'To love all that is lovely, and all that you can,' as the song has it."

I laid a hand lightly on her soft arm, and



was about to say something there could be no misconstruing, while a film seemed to pass over my eyes, and my soul rose to my lips ; but Pitblado, who, whether he was listening or not, had a sharp eye on the cattle, now said—

“ Beg your pardon, sir, but I don’t like the look of that leader.”

“ The blood mare with the white star on her forehead,” said I, touching her lightly on the flank with the whip, and making her curvet ; “ she is usually very quiet.”

“ Perhaps so, sir ; but she’s always clapping her ears close down—throwing her eyes backward, and showing the whites. She’s up to mischief, I’m certain.”

“ Jump down, then,” said I, “ shorten the curb, and lengthen the traces by a hole or two.”

This was done in a trice ; Willie sprang into his seat like a harlequin, and away we went from the Kirkton of Largo at a rasping pace.

“ She’s a lovely animal, with pasterns like a girl’s ankles ; but she’s clapping her tail a little too close in for my taste, sir, and she’s up to some devilry,” persisted Pitblado, and ere long his surmises proved correct.



"We've left the drag behind ; distanced it clean, already," said I.

"It's a heavier drag than the regimental one at head-quarters, sir," said Willie, taking the hint to look back now ; but the sound of hoofs or wheels could no longer be detected in the still evening air behind.

Full of blood and ill-natured, over-corned, and anxious to get back to their stables, the speed of the animals increased to a pace that soon became alarming, and the light vehicle to which they were harnessed, as I have said, a tandem, swept along like a toy at their heels, while we flew eastward by Halhill, and, ere we reached the woods of Balcarris, where the road turns due north, and round by the base of Dunnikier Law, it was evident that they were fairly and undoubtedly off !

The leader had got the bit between her teeth, and, when descending a hill-side, the splinter-bar goaded the wheeler to madness. All my strength, together with Pitblado's, failed to arrest their mad career, and, while imploring Lady Louisa, who clung to me, "to hold fast, to sit still," and so forth, I bent all my energies rather to guide them along, and avoid collisions, than to attempt to stop them ; and, to add to our troubles, the patent drag gave way.



Luckily, the road was smooth, and free from all obstruction.

"To the left, sir—to the left," shouted Pitblado, as we came to a place where two roads branched off; "that is Drumhead. Our way lies due west."

Pitblado might as well have shouted to the wind; the infuriated brutes took their own way, and tore at an awful pace due north. Horses pasturing by the wayside trotted to the rear, and sheep browsing in the fields fled at our approach; cattle kicked up their heels, and scampered away in herds. House-dogs barked, terriers yelled, and pursued us open-mouthed; children, ducks, cocks, and hens fled from the village gutters; peasants, at their cottage doors, held up their hands, with shouts of fear, while broad fields and lines of leafless trees, turf dykes, and hedges, drains, and thatched dwellings seemed all to fly past with railway speed, or to be revolving in a circle round us.

A shriek of commiseration burst from my affrighted companion, when, just as we swept past the base of Drumcarra Craig, in the cold, bleak, and elevated district of Cameron, poor Willie Pitblado, who had risen to give me the assistance of his hands in bearing on the reins, or for the last time to try and let down the



faulty drag, fell out behind, and vanished in a moment. And now before us spread Magus Muir, where the graves of Archbishop Sharpe's murderers lie in a field that has never been ploughed even unto this day.

Twilight had come on, and a brilliant aurora, forming great pillars of variegated light, that shot upward and downward from the horizon to the dome of heaven, filled all the northern quarter of the sky with singular but many masses of streamers. Thus, the brilliance of the atmosphere cast forward in strong and black outline the range of hills that bound the Howe of Fife, and terminate the valley through which the Ceres flows to join the Eden ; and all this, I think, conduced to add to the terror of the horses.

Pitblado's fate greatly alarmed and concerned me, for he was a brave, handsome, and faithful fellow, and an old acquaintance ; but I had another—a nearer, dearer—and more intense source of anxiety. If she who sat beside me, clinging to me, and embracing my left arm with all her energy—she, whom I loved so deeply, and whom I had lured into the tandem, when she might have been safely in the drag or carriage, should lose her life that night, of what value would my future



existence be, embittered with such a terrible reflection?

"If a linchpin comes loose, or a trace gives way," thought I, "all will be over with us both!"

"Oh, Mr. Norcliff, Mr. Norcliff!" she exclaimed, while the tears, which she had no means of wiping away, streamed over her pale and beautiful face, and while her head half-reclined on my soldier. "Heaven help us, this is terrible—most terrible! We shall certainly be killed!"

"Then I hope it shall be *together*," I exclaimed. "Lady Loftus—dear Lady Loftus—dearest Louisa (here was a jump) trust to me, and me only! (what stuff men will talk; who else could she trust to?) and if it is in the power of humanity to save you, you shall be saved, or I shall die with you. Louisa, oh, Louisa, hear me. I would not—I could not survive you; but—but sit still, sit close, grasp me, and hold on for Heaven's sake. (D—n that leader!) Oh, Louisa, I love you, love you dearly and devotedly. You must believe me when I say it at a time like this; when death, perhaps, is staring us face to face. Speak to me, dearest!"

I felt that the day, the hour, the moment



of destiny had come ; that time of joy or sorrow for ever, and casting all upon it, committing the reins to my right hand, I threw my left arm round her, and pressing her to my breast, told her again and again how fondly I loved her, while still our mad steeds tore on.

“ I know that you love me, Mr. Norcliff,” she said, in a low and agitated voice, as her constitutional self-possession returned. “ I have long seen it—felt it.”

“ My adorable Louisa !”

“ And I will not—will not——”

She paused, painfully.

“ What ? Oh, speak.”

“ Deny that I love you in return.”

“ Heaven bless you, my darling, for saying so ; for lifting a load of anxiety from my heart, and for making me so happy,” I whispered, making an ineffectual effort to kiss her forehead.

“ But then, Mr. Norcliff——”

“ Alas ! yes ; but what ?”

“ There is mamma ; you know, perhaps, her views concerning me—ambitious views ; but we must take another time, if Heaven spares, to talk of that matter.”

“ What time so good as this ?” I exclaimed,



impetuously, as we tore along, and Magus Muir, the Bishop's Wood, and Gullane's gravestone were left behind. "Poor me, a' lieutenant of the lancers; and the earl, your father."

"Oh, dear papa—good, easy man—I don't think he troubles his head much in the affair; but if mamma knew all this, such a violation of her standing orders, heaven help us!"

She could almost have laughed but for the peril on which we were rushing, and a shrill little cry escaped her, as the leader suddenly quitted the hard highway, and, followed by the wheeler, passed through an open field gate, and continued at the same frightful speed across a large space of pasture land that sloped steeply down to where my forebodings told me the Eden lay, and there, sure enough, in less than a minute, we could see the river rolling among the copsewood, with its waters swollen by the snows that had recently melted among the Lomond hills.

Though a placid stream usually, and having a pretty level course, in that quarter the banks were rugged, and the bed full of fallen larches and large boulder stones. If the vehicle overturned, what might be the fate of



her who had just acknowledged that she loved me ?

A prayer—almost a solemn invocation—rose to my lips, when, with the rapidity of light, the thought occurred to me of heading the leader towards a little stone bridge that spanned the stream. It was a mere narrow footway for shepherds, sheep, and cattle, and not of sufficient breadth to permit the passage of a four-wheeled gig ; but I knew that if the latter could be successfully jammed between the walls, the course of the runaways would be arrested.

There was no alternative between attempting this and risking death from drowning or mutilation in the rugged bed of the swollen stream.

Down the steep grassy slope our foam-covered cattle rushed straight for the narrow bridge ; I grasped the rail of the seat with one hand and arm ; the other was round Louisa, lest the coming shock might throw us off. In an instant we felt it, and she clung to me, half-fainting, as there was a terrible crash, a ripping and splitting sound, as wood was smashed, and harness rent. Our course was arrested—the wheels and axle of the fore-carriage wedged between the stone walls of

.



the narrow bridge, the wheeler kicking furiously at the splinter-bar and splash-board, and the leader, the blood mare, the source of all the mischief, hanging over the parapet in the stream, snorting, half-swimming, and for ought I cared, wholly hanging.

My first thought was my companion. We both trembled in every limb as I lifted her gently to the ground, and placed the seat-cushions on a stone, where she might sit and compose herself till I considered what we should do next, and where we were.

She was greatly agitated, but passively permitted me to encircle her with my arms, to assure her that she was safe, to press her hands, and to wipe away her tears caressingly. I forgot all about poor Pitblado, "spilt" on the road, all about my uncle's best blood mare hanging in the traces, and all about the half-ruined gig.

In short, I felt only the most exquisite joy that I had gained, as it were, life and Louisa together. It was that moment of intense rapture, when combined with the natural revulsion of feeling, consequent to escape from a deadly peril; I enjoyed that emotion which a man feels once, and once only, in a lifetime, when the first woman he loves con-



fesses to a mutual regard ; and, half-kneeling, I stooped over her, kissing her again and again, and assuring her—of I know not what.

From one of her fingers I transferred to mine a ring of small value—a pearl set in blue enamel, leaving in its place a rose diamond. It was a beautiful stone, of the purest water, which I had found when our troops sacked the great pagoda at Rangoon, and I had it set at Calcutta by a jeweller, who assured me that it was worth nine hundred rupees, or ninety pounds, and I only regretted now that it was not worth ten times as much, to be truly worthy of the slender finger on which I placed it.

She regarded me with a loving smile on her pale face, and in the quiet depths of her soft dark eyes, as she reclined in my arms. I gazed on her with emotions of the purest rapture. She was now humbled, gentle, and loving—this brilliant beauty, this proud earl's daughter—mine, indeed—all that a man could dream of as perfection in a woman or as a wife ; at least, I thought so then ; and I was not a little proud of the idea of what our mess would say—the colonel, Studhome, Scriven, Wilford, Berkeley, and the rest—of a marriage that would certainly be creditable



to the regiment, though we had titles and honourables enough in the lancers; and already, in fancy, I saw myself "tooling" into Maidstone barrack-square in a dashing phaeton, with a pair of cream-coloured ponies, with Norcliff and Loftus quartered on the panels, and silver harness, and Louisa by my side, in one of the most perfect morning toilettes and of marriage bonnets that London millinery could produce.

Poor devil! with only two hundred per annum besides my pay, and the Crimea before me, I was thus acquiring castles in Airshire, and estates in the Isle of Sky.

Oblivious of time, while the woods and hills of Dairsie were darkening against the sky, while the murmuring Eden flowed past towards the Tay, and the ever-changing spears and streamers of the northern aurora were growing brighter and more bright, I remained by the side of Louisa, wholly entranced, and only half-conscious that something should be done to enable us to return home; for night was coming on—the early night of the last days of January, when the sober sun must set at half-past four—and I knew not how far we were from Calderwood Glen.

Suddenly a shout startled us; the hoofs of



horses were heard coming rapidly along the highway, and then three mounted men wheeled into the field and rode straight towards us. To my great satisfaction, one proved to be my faithful fellow, Willie Pitblado, who, not a whit the worse for his capsize on the road, had procured horses and assistance at the place called Drumhead, and tracked us to where we lay, wrecked, by the old bridge of the Eden.

"Poor Willie," said Louisa, "I thought you were killed."

"No, my lady," said he, touching his hat; "it's lang or the deil dees by the dykeside."

Of this answer she could make nothing.

The gig was now released and run back, and though scratched, splintered, and started in many places by the shock to which it had been subjected, it was still quite serviceable. The wheeler was traced to it again, the leader, her ardour completely cooled now, was fished out of the stream and harnessed again, and in less than half an hour, so able had been the assistance rendered us, we were bowling along the highway towards my uncle's house.

An hour's rapid driving soon brought us in sight of the long avenue, the lighted windows, and quaint façade of the old mansion, at the



door of which I drew up ; and as I threw the whip and reins to Willie Pitblado, and fearless now even of Mamma Chillingham, handed my companion down, tenderly and caressingly, I found myself an engaged man, and the *fiancé* of one of the fairest women in Britain—the brilliant Louisa Loftus !







## CHAPTER XII.

It passed—and never marble looked more pale  
Than Lucy, while she listened to his tale.  
He marked her not; his eye was cold and clear,  
Fixed on a bed of withering roses there;  
He marked her not, for different thoughts possessed  
His anxious mind, and laboured in his breast.

ELLIS.



NOTWITHSTANDING all that had passed, and that we had been carried so far in the wrong direction, we were not long behind the rest of our party in reaching Calderwood, where the history of our disaster fully eclipsed for the evening all the exciting details of the fox-hunters, though many gentlemen in scarlet, with spattered tops and tights, whom Sir Nigel had brought, made the drawing-room look unusually gay.

Lady Louisa remained long in her own apartment; the time seemed an age to me; yet I was happy—supremely happy. I had a vague idea of the new emotions that served, perhaps, to detain her there; but an air of



cold reserve and unmistakable displeasure hovered on the forehead of her haughty mother.

When Louisa joined us, she had perfectly recovered her usual equanimity and presence of mind—her calm, pale, and placid aspect. She was somewhat silent and reserved ; this passed for her natural terror of the late accident, and though we remained some distance apart, her fine dark eyes sought mine, ever and anon, and were full of intelligent glances, that made my heart leap with joy.

Cora, who shrewdly suspected that there had been more in the affair than what Berkeley called “a doocid spill,” regarded us with interest, and with a tearful earnestness that surprised us, after our return, and during the explanation which we were pleased to make. But whatever tales my face told, Louisa’s was unfathomable, so from its expression suspicious little Cora could gather nothing ; though, had she carried her scrutiny a little further, she might have detected my famous Rangoon diamond sparkling on the engaged finger of her friend’s left hand.

Cora was on this night, to me, an enigma !

What had gone wrong with her ? When



she smiled, it seemed to several—to me especially—that the kind little heart from whence these smiles were wrung was sick. Why was this, and what or who was the source of her taciturnity and secret sorrow?—not Berkeley, surely—they had come home in the drag together—she could never love such an ass as Berkeley; and if the fellow dared to trifle with her—but I thrust the thought aside, and resolved to trust the affair to her friend and gossip, the Lady Loftus.

A few more days glided swiftly and joyously past at Calderwood Glen; we had no more riding and driving; but, as the weather was singularly open and balmy for the season, we actually had more than one picnic in the leafless woods, and I betook me to the study of botany and arboriculture with the ladies.

I enjoyed all the delicious charm of a successful first love! The last thought on going to repose; the first on waking in the morning; and the source of many a soft and happy dream between.

The peculiarity, or partial disparity, of our positions in life caused secrecy. Denied, by the presence of others, the pleasure of openly conversing of our love, at times we had recourse to furtive glances, or a secret and



thrilling pressure of the hand or arm was all we could achieve.

Then there were sighs the deeper for suppression,  
And stolen glances sweeter for the theft;  
And burning blushes, though for no transgression,  
Tremblings when met, and restlessness when left.

Small and trivial though these may seem, they proved the sum of our existence, and even of mighty interest, lighting up the eye, and causing the pulses of the heart to quicken.

We became full of petty and lover-like stratagems, and of enigmatical phrases, all the result of the difficulties that surrounded our intercourse when others were present—especially Lady Chillingham, who was by nature cold, haughty, and suspicious, with, I think, a natural born antipathy to subalterns of cavalry in particular. Cora saw through our little artifices, and Berkeley, that Anglo-Scotch snob of the nineteenth century, had ever his eyes remarkably wide open to all that was going on around him, and thus the perils of discovery and instant separation were great, while our happy love was in the flush.

This danger gave us a common sympathy, a united object, a delicious union of thought



and impulse. Nor was romance wanting to add zest to the secrecy of our passion. Ah, were I to live a thousand years, never should I forget the days of happiness I spent in Calderwood Glen with Louisa Loftus.

Our interviews had all the mystery of a conspiracy, though, save Cora, none as yet suspected our love ; and there was a part of the garden, between two old yew hedges—so old that they had seen the Calderwoods of past ages cooing and billing in powdered wigs and coats of mail, with dames in Scottish farthingales and red-heeled shoes—where, at certain hours, by a tacit understanding, we were sure of meeting ; but with all the appearance of chance, though occasionally for a time so brief, that we could but exchange a pressure of the hand, or snatch a caress, perhaps a kiss, and then separate in opposite directions.

Those were blessed and joyous interviews ; memories to treasure and brood over with delight when alone. In the society of our friends, my heart throbbed wildly, when by a glance, a smile, a stolen touch of the hand, Louisa reminded me of what none else could perceive, the secret understanding that existed between us.



And yet all this happiness was clouded by a sense of its brevity, and by our fears for the future ; the obstacles that rank and great fortune on her side, the lack of both on mine, raised between us ; and then there was the certain prospect of a long and dangerous—alas ! it might prove, a final separation.

“They who love,” writes an anonymous author, “must ever drink deeply of the cup of trembling ; but, at times, there will arise in their hearts a nameless terror, a sickening anxiety for the future, whose brightness all depends upon this one cherished treasure, which often proves a foreboding of some real anguish looming in the distant hours.”

“Where is all this to end ?” I asked of myself, as the conviction that something must be done forced itself upon me, for the happy days were passing, and my short leave of absence was drawing to a close.

One day, by the absence of some of our friends, and by the occupation of others, we found ourselves alone, and permitted to have a longer interview than usual, in our yew hedge walk, and we were conversing of the future.

“I have two hundred a year besides my pay, Louisa.” (She smiled sadly at this, and



the smile went doubly to my heart.) "The money has been lodged for my troop with Cox and Co., and my good uncle means well concerning me ; yet, I feel all these as being so small, that were I to address the Earl of Chillingham on the subject of our engagement, it would seem that I had little to offer, and little to urge, save that which is, perhaps, valueless in his aristocratic eyes——"

"And that is?"

"My love for you."

"Don't think of addressing him," said she, weeping on my shoulder ; "he has already views for me in another quarter."

"Views, Louisa !"

"Yes ; pardon me for paining you, dearest, by saying so ; but it is nevertheless true."

"And these views ?" I asked, impetuously.

"Are an offer made for my hand by Lord Slubber de Gullion."

My heart died within me on hearing this name, which, as I once before stated, comes as near the original as possible.

"Hence you see, dearest Newton," she resumed, in a mournful and sweetly-modulated voice, "were you to address my father, it would only rouse mamma, and have the effect of interrupting our correspondence for ever."



“Good heavens ! what then are we to do ?”

“Wait in hope.”

“How long ?”

“Alas ! I know not ; but for the present at least our engagement, like our meetings and our letters, if we *can* correspond, must be secret—secret all. Were the earl, my father, to know that I loved you, Newton (how sweetly those words sounded), he and mamma would urge on Lord Slubber’s suit, and, on finding that I refused, there would be no bounds to mamma’s wrath. You remember Cora’s story of the ‘Clenched Hand ;’ you remember the ‘Bride of Lammermoor,’ and must see what a determined mother and long domestic tyranny may do.”

I clasped my hands, for my heart was wrung ; but she regarded me kindly and lovingly.

“On your return home, as colonel of your regiment, perhaps, we shall then, at all hazards, bring the matter before him, and treat Slubber’s offer with contempt, as the senile folly of an old man in his dotage. You, at least, shall propose for me in form——”

“And if Lord Chillingham refuse ?”

“Though we English people can’t make Scotch marriages now, I shall be yours, dearest



Newton, as I am now, only that it shall be irrevocably and for ever."

A close and mute embrace followed, and then I left her in a paroxysm of grief, while my head whirled with the combined effects of love and joy, and of sorrow, not unmixed with anger.

"I wonder what the subjects are that lovers talk of in their tête-à-têtes," says my brother of the pen and sword, W. H. Maxwell, and the same surmise frequently occurred to myself, before I met or knew Louisa Loftus.

We never lacked a subject now. The peculiarities of our relative positions, our caution for the present, and our natural anxieties for the future, afforded us full topics for conversation or surmise; but the few remaining days of my leave "between returns" glided away at Calderwood Glen; the time for my departure drew nigh; already had Pitblado divided a sixpence with my lady's soubrette, and packed up all my superfluous traps, and within six and thirty hours Berkeley and I would have to report ourselves in uniform at head-quarters, or be returned absent without leave.

It was in the evening, when I had gone as usual to meet Louisa at the seat where the



close-clipped yew hedges formed a pleasant screen, that, to my surprise, and by the merest chance, I found it occupied by my cousin Cora.

The January sunset was beautiful; the purple flush of evening covered all the western sky, and bathed in warm tints the slopes of the Lomond hills. The air was still, and we heard only the cawing of the venerable rooks that perched among the woods of the old manor, or swung to and fro on its many gilt vanes.

Cora was somewhat silent, and I, being thoroughly disappointed by finding her there in lieu of Louisa Loftus, was somewhat taciturn, if not almost sulky.

Somehow—but how, I know not—Cora led me to talk insensibly of our early days, and as we did so, I could perceive that she regarded me earnestly from time to time, after I simply remarked that ere long I should be far, far away from her, and among other scenes. Her dovelike, dark eye became suffused, and the tinge on her rounded cheek died away when I laughingly referred to the days when we had been little lovers, and when Fred Wilford and I—he was now a captain of ours—used to punch each other's heads in pure spite and jealousy about her;



but this youthful jealousy once took a more dangerous turn.

Among the rocks in the glen an adder of vast size took up its residence, and had bitten several persons. It had been seen by some to leap more than seven yards high, and was a source of such terror to the whole parish, that my uncle, and even the provost of Dunfermline, had offered rewards for its destruction.

On this I boldly dared my boy-rival to face it ; but Fred Wilford, who was on a visit to us from Rugby, had more prudence, or less love for little Cora, and so declined the attempt.

Flushed with boyish pride and recklessness, I climbed the steep face of the rock, stirred up the adder with a long stick, flung it to the ground, and killed it by repeated blows of an axe, a feat of which my uncle never grew tired of telling, and the reptile was now in the library, sealed up in a glass-case, being deemed a family trophy, and, as Binns said, always kept in the best of spirits.

I sat with Cora's white and slender hand in mine, gazing at her soft and piquant features, her pouting lip and dimpled chin, and the dark hair so smoothly braided under her little hat, and over each pretty and deli-



cate ear. Cora was very gentle and very charming; she had ever been to me a kind little playmate, a loving sister, and she sighed deeply when I spoke of my approaching departure.

"You go by sea?" she asked.

"If we go to Turkey—of course."

"Embarking at Southampton?"

"Embarking at Southampton—exactly, and sailing directly for the East, I suppose," said I, while leisurely lighting a cigar; "I shall soon learn all the details and probabilities at head-quarters; but the route may not come for two months yet, as red-tape goes."

"You will think of us sometimes, Newton, in those strange and dangerous lands? Of your poor old uncle, who loves you so well, and—and of me?"

"Of course, and of Louisa Loftus. Don't you think her very handsome?"

"I think her lovely."

"My cigar annoys you?"

"Not at all, Newton."

"But it makes you turn your face away."

"You met often, I believe, before you came here?"

"Oh, very often. I used to see her at the



cathedral every Sunday in Canterbury ; at the balls at Rochester and Maidstone——”

“ And in London ? ”

“ Repeatedly ! I saw her at her first presentation at Court, when the colonel presented me, on obtaining my lieutenancy, and returning from foreign service. She created quite a sensation !

I spoke in such glowing terms of my admiration for Louisa Loftus, that some time elapsed before I detected the extreme pallor of Cora’s cheek, and a peculiar quivering of her under lip.

“ Good heavens, my dear girl, you are ill ! It is this confounded cigar—one of a box that Willie got me in Dunfermline,” I exclaimed, throwing it away. “ Your hand is trembling, too.”

“ Is it ? Oh, no ! Stay ! I am only a little faint,” she murmured.

“ Faint ! Why the deuce should you be faint, Cora ? ”

“ This bower of yew hedges is close ; the atmosphere is still, or chill, or something,” she said, in a low voice, while pressing a lovely little hand on her bosom ; “ and it seems to me that I felt a pang here.”

“ A pang, Cora ? ”



“Yes, I feel it sometimes.”

“You, one of the best waltzers in the county! You have no affection of the heart, or any of that sort of thing?”

She smiled sadly, even bitterly, and rose, saying—

“Here comes Lady Louisa. Say nothing of this.”

Her dark eyes were swimming; but not a tear fell from their long, black, silky lashes, that lent such softness to her sweet and feminine face. She abruptly withdrew her tremulous hands from mine, and just as Louisa approached, hurriedly left me.

What did all this emotion mean? What did it display or conceal? I was thoroughly bewildered.

A sudden light began to break upon me.

“What is this?” thought I. “Can Cora be in love with me herself? Oh, nonsense! she has known me from boyhood. The idea is absurd! Yet her manner——. This will never do. I must avoid her, and to-morrow I leave for England.”

Louisa sat beside me, and, save her, Cora and all the world were alike forgotten.





## CHAPTER XIII.

Forget thee? If to dream by night, and muse on thee  
by day;  
If all the worship, deep and wild, a poet's heart can pay;  
If prayers in absence, breathed for thee to Heaven's pro-  
tecting power;  
If winged thoughts that flit to thee, a thousand in an  
hour;  
If busy Fancy, blending thee with all my future lot;  
If this thou call'st forgetting, thou, indeed, shalt be  
forgot.

MOULTRIE.



HAD but one, only one, meeting  
more with Lady Louisa, and it  
was, indeed, a sad one. We  
could but hope to meet again—  
near Canterbury, perhaps—at  
some vague period before my regiment  
marched; and prior to that I was to write  
to her, on some polite pretence, under cover  
to Cora.

This was certainly somewhat undefined and  
unsatisfactory for two engaged lovers, espe-  
cially for two so ardent as we were, and in



the first flush of a grand passion ; but we had no other arrangement to make ; and never shall I forget our last, long, mute embrace on the last evening, when, scared by footsteps on the garden walk, we literally tore ourselves away, and separated to meet at the dinner-table, and act as those who were almost strangers to each other, and to perform the mere formalities, the politenesses, and cold ceremonies of well-bred life.

I could not help telling my good uncle of my success ; but under a solemn promise of secrecy, for a time at least.

“ All right, boy,” said he, clapping me on the shoulder. “ Keep her well in hand, and I’ll back you against the field to any amount that is possible ; but that gouty old peer, my Lord Slubber, is richer than I am ; and then Lady Chillingham has the pride of Lucifer. Draw on me whenever you want money, Newton. Since Archie died at college, and poor Nigel at the battle of Goojerat, I have no boy to look after but you.”

The last hour came inexorably. We shook hands with all. When that solemn snob, my brother officer, Mr. de Warr Berkeley, and I entered the carriage which was to take us to the nearest railway station, there were



symptoms of considerable emotion in the faces of the kind circle we were leaving, for the clouds of war had darkened fast in the East during the month we had spent so pleasantly ; and the ladies—the poor girls especially—half viewed us as foredoomed men.

Louisa was pale as death ; she trembled with suppressed emotion, and her eyes were full of tears. Even her cold and stately mother kissed me lightly on the cheek ; and at that moment, for Louisa's sake, I felt my heart swell with sudden emotion of regard for her.

My uncle's hard but manly hand gave mine a hearty pressure, and he kindly shook the hand of Willie Pitblado, who was bidding adieu to his father, the old keeper, and slipped a couple of sovereigns into it.

Sir Nigel's voice was quite broken ; but there was no tear in the hot, dry eyes of poor Cora. Her charming face was very pale, and she bit her pouting nether lip, to conceal, or to prevent, its nervous quivering.

"An odd girl," thought I, as I kissed her twice, whispering, "Give the last one to Louisa."

But, ah ! how little could I read the secret of the dear little heart of Cora, which was



beating wildly and convulsively beneath that apparently calm and unmoved exterior ! But a time came when I was to learn it all.

“ Good-bye to Calderwood Glen,” cried I, leaping into the carriage. “ A good-bye to all, and hey for pipeclay again ! ”

“ Pipeclay and gunpowder too, lad,” said my uncle. “ Every ten years or so the atmosphere of Europe requires to be fumigated with it somewhere. Adieu, Mr. Berkeley. God bless you, Newton ! ”

“ Crack went the whip, round went the wheels ; ” the group of pale and tearful faces, the ivy-clad porch, and the turreted façade of the old house vanished, and then the trees of the avenue appeared to be careering past the carriage windows in the twilight, as we sped along at a rapid trot.

For mental worry or depression there is no more certain and rapid cure than quick travelling and transition from place to place ; and assuredly that luxury is fully afforded by the locomotive appliances of the present age.

Within an hour after leaving Calderwood, we occupied a first-class carriage, and were flying by the night express, en route for London, muffled to the eyes in warm railway-rugs and border-plaids, and each puffing a



cigar in silence, gazing listlessly out of the windows, or doing his best to court sleep, to wile the dreary hours away.

Pitblado was fraternizing with the guard in the luggage-van, and, doubtless, enjoying a quiet "weed" the while.

Berkeley soon slept; but I prayed for the celebrated "forty winks" in vain; and thus, wakeful and full of exciting thoughts, I pictured in reverie all that had occurred during the past month.

Gradually the unwilling, but startling, conviction forced itself upon my mind that my cousin Cora loved me! This dear and affectionate girl, from whom I had parted with such a frigid salute as that which Sir Charles Grandison gave Miss Byron at the end of their dreary seven years' courtship, loved me; and yet, blinded by my absorbing passion for the brilliant Louisa Loftus, I had neither known, seen, nor felt it.

Her frequent coldnesses to me, and her ill-concealed irritation at the cool insolence of Berkeley's languid bearing; on more than one occasion, were all explained to me now.

Dear, affectionate, and single-hearted Cora! A hundred instances of her self-denial now crowded on my memory. I remembered now,



at the meet of the Fifeshire fox-hounds at Largo, that it was she who, by a little delicate tact and foresight, contrived to give me that which she knew I so greatly coveted—the drive home in the tandem with Lady Louisa.

What must that act of self-sacrifice have cost her heart, if, indeed, she loved me? I could not write to her on such a subject, or even approach an idea that might, after all, be based on supposition, if not on vanity. More than this—I felt that the suspicion of having excited this secret passion must preclude my writing to Louisa under cover to Cora. Common delicacy and kindness suggested that I should not, by doing so, further lacerate a good little heart that loved me well.

But the next thought was how to communicate with Louisa, Cora being our only medium. Nor could I forget that when I was up the Rangoon river, and when my dear mother died at Calderwood, that it was Cora's kiss that was last upon her cold forehead, and Cora's little hand that closed her eyes for me.

Swiftly sped the express train while these thoughts passed through my mind, and agitated me greatly. To sleep was impossible, and ere midnight I heard the bells of Berwick-



upon-Tweed announce that we had left the stout old kingdom of Scotland far behind us, and were flying at the rate of fifty miles an hour by Belford, Alnwick, and Morpeth, towards the Tyne, and the land of coal and fire.

Every instant bore me farther from Louisa ; and I had but one comfort, that ere long she would be pursuing the same route—perhaps seated in the same carriage—as she sped to her home in the south of England.

I dearly loved this proud and beautiful girl ; and if human language has a meaning, and if the human eyes have an expression, she loved me truly in return ; but though the conviction of this made my heart brim with happiness, it was a happiness not untinged with fears—fears that her love was, perhaps, the fancy of the hour, developed by propinquity and the social circle of a quiet country house ; fears that my joy and success were too great, too bright to last ; and that, after a time, she might see her engagement with a nameless subaltern of cavalry in the light of a *mésalliance*, and be dazzled by some more brilliant offer, for the heiress and only child of the Earl of Chillingham could command many.

War and separation were before us ; and if



I survived to return, would she love me still, and still indeed be mine ?

Her father's consent was yet to be obtained. In my impatience to know the best or the worst, I frequently resolved to break the matter by letter to his lordship ; but, remembering the tears and entreaties of Louisa, I shrank from the grave responsibility of tampering with our mutual happiness.

At other times I thought of confiding the management of the affair entirely to my uncle ; but abandoned the idea, almost as soon as I conceived it : knowing that the old fox-hunting baronet was more hot-headed, proud, and abrupt than politic. In conclusion, I thought it might be better done by a letter from the East, when the earl might politely half entertain an engagement which a bullet might dissolve ; or, should I leave the affair over till I returned ?

Oh ! might I ever return—and if so, how mutilated ? And if I died before Sebastopol, in imagination I saw, in the long, long years that were to follow, myself perhaps forgotten, and Louisa, my affianced bride, the wife of—  
*another !*





## CHAPTER XIV.

And why not death, rather than live in torment?  
To die is to be banished from myself;  
And Sylvia is myself: banished from her  
Is self from self; a deadly banishment!  
What light is light, if Sylvia be not seen?  
What joy is joy, if Sylvia be not by?  
Unless it be to think that she is by,  
And feed upon the shadow of perfection.

SHAKSPEARE.



WHILE yet half-slept, and wholly unrefreshed, after our long and rapid journey by train, we donned our uniforms, with sword-belt and sabretashe, duly reported ourselves to the colonel, who welcomed us back, and within an hour I found myself established in my old quarters, and once more falling into the every-day routine of barrack-life, just as if I had never left Maidstone, and as if my visit to Calderwood and my engagement with Louisa were all a dream. But I had her pearl ring, and the lock of jetty hair, which I had cut from



her beautiful head in jest—a gift in solemn earnest now—and I lost no time in procuring a locket suitable for it, and which I might wear at my neck.

Again I had parades to attend, troop, guard, and stable duties to perform ; but amid these, and all the bustle of Maidstone, the most tiresome and bustling cavalry barrack in the British empire, my heart and thoughts were ever with Louisa Loftus, amid the old woods of Calderwood Glen.

“ War is not yet declared against Russia,” said the colonel, the first evening parade after we joined ; “ but I have it in confidence from head-quarters that it will be ere long, and that we shall form part of the army of the East.”

“ Ah, and are there—haw—any infantry to accompany us ?” asked Berkeley.

“ I should think so,” replied the colonel, laughing at so odd a question, which, as Berkeley asked it elsewhere, caused some amusement at Maidstone, as showing either his ideas of war, or of the strange individualism of the two branches of the service.

“ The guards are already under orders, and embark at Southampton in a few weeks,” resumed the colonel ; “ and we shall have



tough work in getting ready for departure by the time our turn comes—though I am glad to say the lancers are in high order and discipline, and fit for anything.”

Our colonel spoke with pride and confidence; and under his orders, I felt that, with equal confidence, I could really go anywhere or face anything. I had served under him in India, and he had ever been in my eyes the model of a British cavalry officer, and of an English gentleman.

“There is no example of human beauty more perfectly picturesque than a very handsome man of middle age; not even the same man in his youth,” writes one of the most graceful female pens of the present day. Most soothing this to all good-looking fellows, who approach that grand climacteric; and the idea that she is correct always occurred to me when I saw Colonel Beverley, for a handsomer man, though his moustache was becoming grizzled, never drew a sword, and all the regiment admired and esteemed him.

In addition to sword and pistols, our corps was armed with the lance, which the famous Count de Montecuculi of old declared to be “*la Reine des armes pour la cavalerie*,” and the adoption of which was vainly urged by the



great Marechal Saxe in his "Reveries;" but it was first introduced into the British army after the peace of 1815. The only regiment armed in this fashion which previously existed in our service was the British Uhlans, composed of French emigrants, formed out of the remains of the lancers of the French Royalist army. They were all destroyed in the ill-fated expedition to Quiberon, in 1796.

When charging cavalry the banneroles attached to our lances are extremely useful in scaring the horses—after which the rider becomes an easy prey; and the extreme length of the weapon renders it more effective than the sword when charging a square of infantry; while, in addition to this, it is a weapon of great show, as all must admit who have seen a lancer corps, some six hundred strong, riding with all their red and white swallow-tailed banneroles fluttering in the wind.

We had in our ranks more G. C.\* men, perhaps, than any other corps in the service; and, with the exception of one or two of those wealthy parvenus, like Berkeley, who are to be found in many regiments, but more espe-

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\* Good Conduct Ring. We have five regiments of lancers—the 5th, 9th, 12th, 16th, and 17th.



cially in the cavalry, and whom I shall simply describe as yaw-yawing, cold, but fashionable, solemn and unimpressionable military snobs, the officers of the lancers were unquestionably gentlemen by birth, breeding, and education, and formed altogether at mess, on parade, in the ball-room, or on duty, a class of society far superior in tone and bearing to any I have ever had the fortune to be among; and unless it be those of whom I have hinted, every face and name come pleasantly back to memory now, when I think of my fine regiment as it prepared for the army of the East.

We practised daily with our pistols and six-barrelled revolvers; the sword-blades and lance-heads were pointed and edged anew. Some of our mess actually tried bivouacking in the fields at night, to test their hardihood; but, as they were invariably taken for gipsies or housebreakers by the rural police, laughter on one hand, and useless discomfort on the other, cured them of these pranks.

To be ready for anything and everything, and to make his lancers more active horsemen, Colonel Beverley had us all drilled to dismounting on the off-side, a practice which increases the skill of the men, and the steadiness of the horses, and which is simply done by



reversing all the motions of dismounting, after the rider has well secured the lance, the reins, and mane in the right hand, while the left grasps the sword, and lays it across the front of the saddle, with the point to the right. He then dismounts on the off-side, with his lance at the carry in the right hand.

I remember, too, that he was careful in having the men cautioned against giving way to the weight of the lance when mounted, as this occasions bad consequences on long marches ; hence it is very requisite to measure the stirrup leathers frequently, and let the men ride with the lance slung on the left arm. These items may seem trivial ; but a day came when his instructions and precautions proved of inestimable value, and that was when we—*the Six Hundred*—made our ever-memorable charge into the Valley of Death !

A cheque for a handsome sum came from my good old uncle, Sir Nigel, and it proved most seasonable, as we were beset by London Jews and army contractors, and I had, as the phrase goes, “no end” of unexpected things to provide—a few to wit :—

A brace of revolving six-chambered pistols, with spring ramrods, as the papers said, “the most complete and effective ever offered to



the British public." A full Crimean outfit, comprising a waterproof cape and hood, camp-boots, ground-sheet, folding bedstead, mattress, and pair of blankets, a canteen for self and a friend, sponging-bath, bucket, and basin, brush-case, lantern, and havresack, all dog-cheap at thirty guineas, with a pair of bullock-trunks and slings at eight guineas more. Then there was a portable patent tent, weighing only ten pounds; an india-rubber boat, to be used in Balaclava harbour; and heaven only knows how much more rubbish, all of which made a terrible hole in my cheque, and all of which were left behind at Varna, where, doubtless, some enterprising follower of the Prophet would make them his lawful spoil.

Amid those prosy preparations the month of February slipped away, and the twenty-eight days of that month seemed like so many years to me, as I never heard of Louisa Loftus; but, on the 1st of March, Pitblado handed to me a little packet which had come by the mail from London.

It contained a morocco case with a coloured photograph—a photograph of Louisa!

It was done in the best style of a good London artist, and my heart bounded with joy as I gazed on it, studying every feature.



The reader would deem me mad, perhaps, maudlin certainly, if I related all the extravagances of which I was guilty on receipt of this souvenir, this minor work of art, with which I was forced to content me, until a miniature—one of Thorburn's best—which I was resolved to procure, should follow.

Was she in London, or had she merely written to the artist (whose name was on the case) to send me a copy of her miniature, which she knew well I would prize, even as I prized life or health?

On the same day that this dear memorial came I was gazetted to my troop in the regiment, by purchase, Captain B——, whose ill health rendered him totally unfit for foreign service, retiring by the sale of his commission; and though my heart was full of gratitude to my uncle, I verily believe that I thought more of Louisa's miniature than of my promotion.

Both, however, seemed ominous of a happy future. They made a fortunate coincidence. The same mail had brought them from London, and I seemed to tread on air, and committed so many extravagances, and played so many pranks that night at mess, that my old friends, Jack Studhome and Fred Wilford, had to take what they termed "the strong



hand" with me, and march me off to my quarters.

In answer to my letter of thanks, I received a long and rambling one from Sir Nigel, whose literary efforts were frequently a curious medley.

The hunt, the county pack, the next meets were, of course, referred to first, and then came his private troubles. The black-faced sheep had been leaping the fences and eating in the stackyard of the home-farm ; the Highland goats had been eating the yews in the avenue, and poisoning themselves ; the deer had been overthrowing the beescaps on the lawn, and the patent powder to fatten the pheasants had been mislaid by old Pitblado, and was eaten by the rooks instead. Lieutenant James's famous horse-blister had been applied without effect to his favourite hunter, Dunearn, and my old friend Splinterbar had gone dead lame—£300 gone to the dogs !

He had just had a notice of "augmentation, modification, and locality of stipend (whatever the deuce it might all mean) before the Tiend Court," served on him by a ——— Edinburgh writer to the signet, at the instance of the parish minister, whom he disliked as a sour sabbatarian, and whom he had advised in



his next sermon to expound and explain how  
“Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked.”

Not a word about Louisa ! I read on, with  
growing impatience :—

“I have just procured a lot of that stuff  
the English call mangel-wurzel, consisting of  
white globes and long yellows, to plant in  
belts about the thickets where the deer are ;  
they are better for feeding at this time than  
the best of Swedish turnips, and for drawing  
the deer from the covert, for a quiet shot.

“Cora is working all kinds of comforters,  
cuffs, and muffetees for you to wear in the  
Crimea. I asked her to write for me ; but she  
excused herself, so I have to act as my own  
secretary. I don't know what has come over  
the girl of late.

“General Rammerscales, the gouty old  
tiger-hunter, has gone to his place at the  
Bridge-of-Allan ; and our friend the M.P.,  
like a true Scottish one, is shieing at his Par-  
liamentary duties, when he can't get upon a  
committee that pays, and takes especial good  
care never to be in the House when Scottish  
interests are on the tapis, unless whipped in  
when the Lord Advocate has some party or  
private end in view.

“Old Binns and Pitblado send you their



remembrance. Why did your man Willie give the two sovereigns I gave him to his father? The old fellow is well enough off in his cottage, and lives like the son of an Irish king. He shot a magnificent silver pheasant before the Chillingham party left (they are gone then!) and Lady Louisa got the wings for her pork-pie hat.

“Cora seems pining to join the Chillinghams, who, as you, of course, know, have been for a month past at their place near Canterbury. She is in low spirits, poor girl, and goes south in a week, when I shall, perhaps, accompany her. Lady Louisa has written to her thrice since they left. She says that Mr. Berkeley has been frequently visiting them; but never mentions you. What is the meaning of that?”

I paused on reading this, for it embodied a vast deal for reflection!

That the Loftuses should be at Chillingham Park unknown to me was not strange; neither was it strange that, situated as we were, poor Louisa should not mention me in her letters to Cora; but that Berkeley should be their frequent visitor, and omit to mention, or conceal that circumstance from me, was certainly startling!



Berkeley! So this accounted for what the mess had remarked—his frequent absences from that agreeable board, from parades, and the used-up condition of his private horses. Was there any sly game afoot? So far as he was concerned, could I doubt it? His reserve to me declared that there was; and this game had been played for a month, with or without success, how was I to learn? Ha! thought I, if they knew about Miss Auriol, his unfortunate mistress! But noble morality is frequently very opaque—and my pay and expectations were but moonshine, when opposed to his solid thousands per annum.

I was sorry to hear that Cora was coming so far south as Canterbury; for much as I loved and esteemed my cousin, I felt that I should rather avoid her now. I resume the letter.

“How does your affair with la belle Louisa progress—eh? Well, I hope; though I think, with Thackeray, that ‘every man ought to be in love a few times in his life, and have a smart attack of the fever. You are the better after it is over.’

“So we are to have hostilities at last! I was in Edinburgh yesterday, anent the programme of the spring meeting at Mussel-



burgh, and heard war declared by Britain against Russia. It was proclaimed at the market cross by the Rothesay, Albany, and Islay heralds, attended by the Kintyre, Unicorn, and Ormond pursuivants, all in their tabards, and a strong guard of Highlanders, with bayonets fixed, and colours flying. It was a quaint and picturesque sight, that did your old uncle's heart good, and set him thinking ; for the same trumpets had many a time in the same place proclaimed war against England in the days of old."

So ended my uncle's rambling letter, which certainly had the effect of setting me to think too, and with a heart full of sudden trouble, anxiety, and irritation.







## CHAPTER XV.

In aught that tries the heart, how few withstand the proof.

\* \* \* \* \*

What is the worst of woes that wait on age ?

What stamps the wrinkle deeper on the brow ?

To view each loved one blotted from life's page,

And be alone on earth, as I am now ?

BYRON.



F Lady Louisa had not mentioned me in her letter to Cora, there was doubtless a secret and very good reason for the omission ; but I thought it cold, and certainly uncourteous, that the countess, fresh from a long visit at Calderwood, should omit to invite me to her house ; and that the earl should not have left his card for me at the barracks.

So Cora was going to Chillingham Park ! Well, at all events, I would visit my cousin Cora, were it but to evince my regard for Sir Nigel. But to know that Louisa was now, and had been for a month past, within a few




miles of me, and that I had neither seen her nor heard from her, while Berkeley was a frequent visitor at her father's house, filled me with such mortification that I could barely control my emotion when in his presence.

His silence on the subject, too, added to my suspicions, and inflamed my smothered wrath; yet it was a matter on which I had no right to question him.

Wounded vanity and self-esteem also sealed my tongue; and I actually despised myself when discovering that I could not help remarking his absence or his presence in quarters, and his going from the barracks to and fro.

In the old duelling days—ay, had we been so circumstanced only some ten years before, and ere so decided a change came over public opinion—I should have made short work of it with my esteemed brother officer, and unmasked his duplicity.

He might be a suitor, to whose suit no response was made, even though Lady Chillingham seconded his intentions; but then she had, I knew, views regarding Lord Slubber. Louisa, however, could not have changed; or, if so, why send me the pretty miniature?





Vainly I strove to busy myself with the interior economy of my troop, its management and discipline. Vainly I sought to kill time by attending closely to the men's messes and equipment, their pay-books, accoutrements, and horses, counting the days as they passed ; but no letters came.

I frequently absented myself from the barracks between the parades, with that strange superstition and hope which many persons have, that if they go away for a little time they will find the longed-for answer when they return. But save tradesmen's bills—missives which became more urgent as the rumoured day of departure drew nearer—no enclosures ever came to me.

At last, finding suspense intolerable, one evening—I remember that it was the last of March—Beverley gave me leave from parades for two days. I mounted, and took the way by Sittingbourne—a quaint old Kentish town, which consists of one wide street bordering the highway, and by the village of Ospringe, to Canterbury, where I put up at the Royal Hotel ; and, after having my horse corned, trotted him along the Margate Road, till I came to the well-known gate of Chillingham Park.



The lodge—a mimic castle in the Tudor style—was pretty, and already covered with green climbers ; through the bars of the iron gate, which was surmounted by a gilded earl's coronet, I could see the carefully-gravelled avenue winding away with great sweeps between the stately old trees, and bordered by the smooth, velvet-like lawn of emerald green, towards the house, a small glimpse of the Grecian peristyle, and the white walls of which were just visible.

There she dwelt ; and I gazed wistfully at the white patch that shone in the sunshine between the gnarled stems of her old ancestral trees.

On hearing a horse reined up without, the lodge-keeper came forth, key in hand, and politely touched his hat, as if waiting my pleasure ; but I waved my hand, and with a flushing cheek and an anxious heart, let the reins of my nag drop on his neck, and rode slowly and heedlessly on.

Unvisited and uninvited, I felt that to have left a card at Chillingham Park would have been an intrusion unwarranted by the rules of good society—rules which I warmly bequeathed to the infernal gods. I had come to Canterbury ; but to what end ?—unless I



met Louisa on the road, or in the city, and such wished-for chances seldom fall to the lot of lovers!

There was the cathedral, where, doubtless, she and her family would be on a Sunday, in their luxuriously-cushioned pew, attended by a tall "Jeames" in plush, carrying a great Bible, a nosegay, and gold-headed cane; but to thrust myself upon her there was too humble a proceeding for my then mood of mind.

I longed with all my soul to see her, were it but for a moment; and yet I also longed for the route to the East, as a relief from my present torture; and come it soon would now. There was some consolation in that conviction.

War had already been declared against Russia by the Western Powers of Europe. On the 23rd of the last month the brigade of guards had departed from London, after taking farewell of the Queen at Buckingham Palace; the Baltic fleet had sailed from Spithead; many of our troops were already embarked; and the French fleet for the North Sea had sailed from Brest.

All betokened earnest and rapid preparations for a protracted contest; so I felt assured



that our days in Maidstone were numbered now.

How long, or how far I wandered on that evening, full of vague and most dispiriting thoughts, I know not—near to Margate certainly, and the sun was setting as I returned, keeping near the sea-shore, and in sight of the countless white sails and smoky funnels of the craft that were standing outward or inward about the mouths of the Thames and Medway.

The sun sunk beyond the horizon ; but the twilight was strong and clear. The place was lonely and still ; and, save the chafing of the sea on the rocks at the Reculvers, not a sound came on the calm atmosphere of the soft spring evening. I was there alone, with my own thoughts for company, and found it difficult to realize the idea that the roar of London, with all its mingled myriads of the human race, was but sixty miles distant from where my horse nibbled the grass that grew by the sequestered wayside.

The whole scenery was intensely English. Against the rosy flush of the sunset sky, that old landmark for mariners, the Sisters, as the two spires of the ancient church are named, stood up sharply and darkly defined about a



mile distant ; near me spread an English park, studded with fine old timber, a model of beauty and fertility, the sward of the most brilliant green, and closely mown, as if shaved with a huge razor. The smoke of the quaint old Saxon village curled upwards far into the still air, and all seemed peaceful and quiet as the shades of evening deepened—quiet as the dead of ages in the graves that lie about the basement of the old church that marks the spot where St. Augustine—sent by Pope Gregory on the errand of conversion—first put his foot upon the Saxon shore ; and as if further to remind me that I was in England, and not in my native country, the curfew bell now rang out upon the stilly air, tolling “ the knell of parting day,” for, as the Norman power stopped on the banks of the Tweed, the curfew is, of course, unknown in Scotland.

I had been lost in reverie for some time—how long I know not, while my horse shook his bridle and ears ever and anon at the evening flies, and cropped the herbage that grew under a thick old hedge, which bordered the flinty and chalky way—when the sound of voices roused me, and close by a rustic wooden stile, that afforded a passage through the hedge



in question, I suddenly beheld a man and woman in parley—conversation it could not be termed, as the former was evidently confronting, and rudely barring, the progress of the latter.

On the summit of the stile her figure was distinctly seen in dark outline against the twilight sky.

She seemed young and handsome, with a smart little black-velvet hat and feather. Her small hands were well-gloved; one firmly grasped her folded parasol and handkerchief, and the other held up her skirt prettily as she sought to descend the stile, showing more than no doubt was generally revealed of a well-rounded leg, a taper ankle, and tiny foot, encased in a fashionable kid boot.

Young, and perfectly ladylike, her whole toilette was in keeping with her lithe and graceful figure; but her face was turned from me.

He who confronted her was a burly, surly, beetle-browed, and rough-visaged fellow, like a costermonger, with a slouched, broken hat, which he touched, half ironically, from time to time; a black beard of a week's growth bristled on his chin; a patch covered one of his discoloured eyes; he had a great cudgel



under his arm, and an ugly bull-terrier, with a huge head and close-shorn ears, was close to his heels. His hand was held forth for charity, and he was fully prepared to enforce that good quality.

Alarmed by the appearance of the fellow, who might very well have passed for a twin brother of Bill Sykes, the young lady hovered with irresolution on the upper step of the stile, and said, timidly—

“Permit me to pass, if you please, sir?”

“Not without giving me summut, marm; and I tell yer I ain’t neither sir nor mister, but just Bill Potkins,” growled the fellow. “I’ve a darned good mind to set this ere dog at your ankles!”

“But I repeat to you that I have left my purse at home,” she urged.

“You have left it at whoam have yer; that is all gammon, for I knows yer, for all yer dainty airs, and the captain too, for the matter o’ that? Shall I tell his name?” he asked, with a scowl, while he surveyed her all over, as if looking for something to snatch or wrench away; but she seemed destitute of ornaments.

“Yes, I have indeed left it; but, for pity sake, allow me to pass,” she said, faintly, and



then, gathering strength, added, "Moreover, fellow, you must."

"Criky; that's a good 'un—must I really, now?"

"Yes, please," returned the young girl, in tears.

"Well, I shan't then—not till I've overhauled your pockets, and rummaged yer a bit, and that's all about it."

In a moment his ruffianly hands were upon her; the girl uttered a shrill scream and he a ferocious oath. I spurred forward my horse, reined him in with dragoon-like precision, and with the butt end of my riding-whip dealt the would-be thief a blow which tumbled him in a heap at the foot of the stile.

With a terrible malediction, while the blood poured over his face, he staggered up, stooped his head, and, thrusting his battered hat well over his eyes, was rushing on with uplifted cudgel, when I dexterously dealt him cut "one" full on the face, and made my horse rear for the purpose of riding him down. On this he uttered a yell, forced his way through the hedge, and taking to flight, disappeared, with his bull-terrier barking furiously at his heels.

The young lady whom I had saved by such



timely succour was still standing, pale and trembling, on the summit of the stile, irresolute which way to turn, when I dismounted, and throwing the reins over my arm, lifted my hat, and, expressing the great satisfaction it afforded me to have been of such timely service, I offered my hand, and assisted her to descend.

She thanked me in an agitated voice, and with a hurried manner, in language which was well chosen, but seemed perfectly natural to her.

I now perceived that she was older than her slender figure at first suggested. She seemed to be about five-and-twenty years of age, with a softly feminine and purely English face, long, tremulous eyelashes, and a perfect nose and chin. She was almost beautiful; but with an air of sadness in her charming little features, which, when her alarm subsided, was too apparent to fail to interest me.

"If you will not deem me intrusive," said I, lifting my hat again, and drawing back respectfully one pace, "I shall be most happy to escort you home."

"I thank you, sir."

"It is almost dark now, and your friends may be anxious about you."



"Friends?" she repeated, inquiringly, in a strange voice, while a cough of a most consumptive sound seemed to rack her slender form.

"Or permit me to escort you to where you were going. It was in this direction luckily, or I could only have taken my horse over the stile by a flying leap."

"But, sir——" she began, and paused.

"Consider, that fellow may be within ear-shot, and he may return again."

"True, sir. I do thank you very much. There was a time when I was not wont to be so unprotected; but I am so loth——"

"To incommode me; is it not so?"

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, do not say so. I am from the barracks at Maidstone, though in mufti, as you see, and trust you will permit me to be your escort. My time at present is completely at your disposal."

"I live about half a mile on this side of the village; and if you will be so very kind——"

"I shall have much pleasure," I replied, with a respectful bow; and, leading my horse by the bridle, I walked onward by her side.

She conversed with me easily and grace-



fully on many subjects—of the oddness of her being abroad at such an hour alone ; but in the country folks thought nothing of it. She had been visiting a sick fisherman's wife, or child, or something, at Herne Bay, and been detained ; that the roads were not unsafe thereabouts in general ; but she must be careful for the future.

Then we remarked, of course, the beauty of the evening, the romance of the scenery along the coast, and its associations, by Herne Bay, the Reculvers, and Birchington ; and my fair companion seemed well read, for she knew all about the old kings of Kent, and, pointing seaward, showed me that, where now the ocean rolled, there stood in other times a goodly Saxon town, with something about a king named Ethelbert, whose palace was close by the Reculvers ; and so, chatting away pleasantly in a tone of voice that was very alluring, for there was a musical chord in it, we proceeded along the highway, until she suddenly paused at the iron gate of a pretty little rustic cottage that stood within a garden plot, back some fifty paces or so from the highway.

" Here, sir," said she, " is the gate of my home ; at least, that which is now so ; and,



with my best thanks, I must bid you adieu."

The girl's voice, air, and manner were certainly charming, and there was a plaintive sadness about her that was decidedly interesting; but my mind was too full of a pure passion, an exalted love for Louisa Loftus to have much enthusiasm about pretty girls then, or to have any taste for running after them, as in the days when I first donned my lancer trappings. Thus, quite careless of cultivating her acquaintance, I was about to withdraw with a polite bow, when she added—

"After the great service you have rendered, and so bravely too, I hope you do not deem me uncourteous in not inviting you to rest for a few minutes; but—but——"

"Papa might frown, and mamma have some fears of a light dragoon," said I, laughing. "Is it not so?"

"My papa!" she replied in a voice that was extremely touching. "Sir, of course you cannot know; but he is dead, and my dear mamma has lain by his side these seven years."

"Pardon me," said I, "if by a heedless speech I have probed a hidden wound—a



sorrow so deep. But your friends, perhaps, might wish to discover the sturdy beggar from whom I saved you, and if I can be of any service, by sending a note to Maidstone barracks, addressed——”


At that moment the door of the cottage opened, and a comely old woman, dressed in good matronly taste, appeared with a lighted candle in her hand, and with an expression of alarm in her good-humoured face, as she exclaimed—

“La, miss! how late you are! I was quite alarmed for fear you had returned, as you often do, by the sea-shore, and met with an accident among the rocks.”

“No, my dear friend, I am here in safety, thanks to this kind gentleman; but for whose fortunate intervention I might have had a very different thing to say.”

And in a few words she related all that had taken place, caressing my horse the while kindly and gracefully with her pretty hands, and, even without fear, kissing his nose, for although sad-eyed, the girl seemed naturally playful.

The woman she addressed had all the appearance of a matronly servant or elderly nurse; she took the young lady in her arms





kindly, kissed her, and thanked me very earnestly for my service. She then proposed that I should enter the cottage, and have at least a glass of cowslip or elder-flower wine, or some such distillation ; but the girl looked rather alarmed. She did not second the invitation, and, finding that I was becoming *de trop*, I put my foot in the stirrup, and mounted.

“Do not deem us lacking either in courtesy or gratitude, sir,” said she, presenting her hand, and looking up with her sad, earnest eyes, which were now full of tears ; “but you do not know the—the peculiarity of my position here.”

I bowed ; but of course remained silent.

“She is, perhaps, a governess—some useful young person, some victim of a stepmother,” thought I.

“I perceived that you were an officer, though out of uniform, and—and——”

“You don’t take every officer for a sad rake I hope ?” said I, laughing.

“Nay, nay, sir ; the scarlet coat is very dear to me !”

“Your father, perhaps, was in the army ?”

“My poor father was a man of peace, and a man after God’s own heart, sir. No, no,



you mistake me," she replied, with an air of annoyance and wounded pride; "but you belong, I presume, to the cavalry?"

"Yes!" said I, as her manner puzzled me more and more.

"The lancers?" she asked, impetuously.

"Yes, the lancers."

I could see, even in the twilight, that her colour deepened, while a painful sigh escaped her.

"Do you know any one in my corps?"

"Yes—no; that is, I never saw it; but I did know a—a——"

Who, or what she knew, I was not destined to learn, for, just at that moment, the postman passed with a lantern glimmering in his hand, a bag slung over his back.

"A letter. You have one for me, have you not?" she asked, in a clear and piercing voice, while holding forth her hands.

"No, miss, I am sorry to say," stammered the man, touching his cap, and passing abruptly on; "better luck in the morning I hope."

"No letter, Nurse Goldsworthy, no letter yet," she muttered. "How cruel, how very cruel! or, nursie dear, is this but the way of the world—the world that *he* has lived in? Oh, it is cold—cold and selfish!" and, pressing



her hands upon her breast, she tottered against the iron gate, and then a violent fit of coughing ensued.

"My good woman," said I, "the chill evening air is unsuited to such a cough as your young lady seems afflicted with."

"Yes, sir, yes, I know it," replied the nurse, while supporting the girl with one hand, she closed and locked the iron gate with the other; and, kissing her forehead the while, said, "Patience, my poor suffering angel, thou wilt get a letter in the morning I tell thee."

"Pray, tell me if I can assist you. I am Captain Norcliff, of the —th Lancers; do please say if I can be of service?" I urged.

"Oh, no, sir, you cannot serve me in that which afflicts me most," replied the girl, weeping; "but a thousand thanks to you; and now, good evening."

"Good evening," I replied, and rode away, feeling strangely puzzled and interested in this girl, by her beauty, grace, and singular manner.

At the village inn, the signboard of which, we may mention by the way, actually bears the head of King Ethelbert, whose spirit seems somehow to hover still about his Anglo-




Saxon *ham* of the Reculvers, I drew up on pretence of obtaining a light for my cigar; but in reality to make some inquiry concerning the pretty enigma, who dwelt in the cottage on the Margate-road.

Just as I reined in, a man on horseback passed me at full speed, and from his figure, seat, and dress, I could have sworn that he was—Berkeley! And he was riding in the direction of Chillingham Park, too.

From two or three Kentish yokels, in hob-nailed shoes and canvas frocks, I endeavoured, after the distribution of a few shillings for beer, to extract some information, and it was yielded cunningly and grudgingly, and after much leering, grinning, and scratching of un-combed heads.

One informed me that she was “thowt to be, somehow, the wife o’ vun o’ them calavary chaps at Maidstone;” another “thowt as she was the vidder of a sea hossifer;” and a third, who thrust his tongue into his fat cheek, remarked “that as I had paid my money I might take my choice,” on which I gave him a cut over the head with my whip, and rode away, followed by a shout of derisive laughter from these Anglo-Saxon chawbacons, who, as far as civilization was concerned, were pretty





much as if his Majesty King Ethelbert were still upon his throne.

It seemed to me also that I heard among their voices that of the fellow Potkins, whom I had so recently thrashed at the stile.







## CHAPTER XVI.

Still as a moonlight ruin is thy power,  
Or meekness of carved marble, that hath prayed  
For ages on a tomb; serenely laid  
As some fair vessel that hath braved the storm,  
And passed into her haven, when the noise  
That cheered her home hath all to silence died,  
Her crew have shoreward parted, and no voice  
Troubles her sleeping image in the tide.

ALFORD.

**M**Y mind was a prey to great inquietude—shall I term it undefined jealousy?—as I galloped back to my hotel. I had left directions with Pitblado that if any letters came for me during the two days I was to be absent from barracks, he was to mount my spare horse, and bring them on the spur direct to Canterbury; but none had come, for he had not appeared.

I lingered over my wine alone, in my solitary room at the Royal, reflecting on the evening's adventures.





Was the horseman who had passed me really Berkeley ?

If so, he was riding towards Chillingham Park, and would just be in time for dinner—a fact that, if he was uninvited, argued considerably familiarity with that proud and exclusive family.

Then there was the girl whom I had rescued at the stile. What a puzzle she was ! I reviewed all her conversation with me, and her strange bearing. Her literary information and education seemed to be of a very superior kind, and her manner was unexceptionable. She seemed gentle, too, and to have been on an errand of charity or mercy. Why was she so agitated when our corps was mentioned ? Her love for a red coat might be natural enough ; but who was “ the captain ” to whom the ruffian referred when threatening her ? Then there was undisguised anxiety for a letter. That was natural also ; and it was an emotion in which I could fully share.

Those yokels in frocks and hobnailed shoes had called her wife, and even widow ; but the servant, or nurse, only named her as “ miss.”

“ What if she and her nurse, the old spider-brusher, were but a delusion and a snare ?



What if her modesty and trepidation, and the old woman's love and anxiety, were but a specious piece of acting?"

Prudence suggested that such things were not uncommon in this good land of Britain.

Next morning I was up and breakfasted betimes and the sunny hours of the forenoon saw me mounted, and, after passing the gate of Chillingham Park at a quick canter, I know not why, unless to soothe my mental irritation, slowly walking my horse in the neighbourhood of the Reculvers, and inhaling the pleasant breeze that came from the sea, whilom, as my companion of last night said, ploughed by the galleys of Cæsar, and along the same shore where the Kentish barbarians gathered, in their war paint, to oppose him.

The sunshine fell redly on the quaint spires of the old church and picturesque cottages of the secluded village. I passed the sign of King Ethelbert, and hovered for a moment at the gate of the cottage ornée, where I had been overnight. Its blinds were closely drawn; but a bird was singing gayly in a gilt wire cage that hung in the porch, which was covered with climbing trailers, already in full flower.



I passed on, and soon reached the rustic stile—the scene of last night's encounter with that interesting individual who had solicited alms with the aid of a black beard and a cudgel. It led to a narrow pathway through the fields and coppice to the sea. The birds were chirping, and some of the trees were already budding. The yellow blaze of noon streamed between their stems upon the green grass, and I could see the blue waves of the sea glittering in the glory of the sunshine far away.

On the summit of the moss-grown stile fancy conjured up the figure of the young girl; and I had a vague, undefined longing to meet her again, and learn something of her history, if she had one.

What was this girl to me, or I to her? Yet I had the desire to see her once more, and, as luck or fate would have it, something glittering among the grass caught my eye, and, on dismounting, I found it to be a little gold locket, containing a lock of brown hair, attached to a black velvet ribbon. It bore the initials "J. D. B." and the date, "1st June."

It had, no doubt, fallen, or been torn from the young lady's neck in the struggle of the



night before. I resolved at once to restore it, and turned my horse's head towards the cottage, not without the unpleasant reflection that this was the 1st of April—All Fools' Day—and I might simply be courting a scrape of some kind.

Leaving my horse at the gate, I rang the bell, and the door was promptly opened by the old woman (whose face expressed such evident disappointment that I saw some one else had been expected), and whom I may as well introduce by name as Mrs. Goldsworthy.

She curtsied very low, and eyed me doubtfully, as if the words of the mess-room song occurred to her—

The scarlet coats! the scarlet coats!  
They are a graceless set,  
From shoulder-strap of worsted lace  
To bullion epaulette.

The deuce is in those soldiers' tongues;  
What specious fibs they tell!  
And what is worse, 'tis so perverse,  
The women *list* as well.

If such were her speculations, I remembered that the lancers wore blue, and the alleged seductions of the scarlet were inapplicable to one who was in mufti.

“My dear madam,” said I, in my most in-



sinuating tone, "passing by the stile this morning, where, last night, I had the pleasure of rescuing your young lady, I found this trinket, which, perhaps, belongs to her?"

"It do, indeed, sir, it do. Lawkamercy! she has well nigh cried her poor eyes out about it, the dear soul! Ah, me, don't you hear her a coughing now?" said the worthy woman, sinking her voice. "'Ow 'appy she will be to get it back again! ay, main 'appy! For whether it was lost by the sea-shore, or in the fields, or whether the thief had taken it, she never could ha' guessed by no means. Oh, sir, 'ow she will be a thankin' you!"

"I hope she has not suffered from her alarm last night?"

"No, sir," said the woman, eyeing me earnestly through a great pair of spectacles, which she carefully wiped with her apron, and put on for that purpose; "but she do have such a terrible cough, poor thing! Please, sir, just to wait a minute."

She hurried away, and returning almost immediately, invited me to enter, saying—

"My young missus will see you, Mr. Hos-sifer."

I was ushered into a prettily-papered and airy little parlour, the open windows of which



looked seaward over the green fields. Another bird in a gilt wire cage hung chirping at the open sash, where the spotless white muslin blinds swayed to and fro in the soft breeze of the April morning.

Everything was scrupulously neat and clean, though plain. There were a number of books, chiefly novels, on the side-table ; a few landscapes in water-colour, in gilt frames, evinced the taste of the proprietor ; an open workbox of elegant design stood on the centre table ; and very tiny kid gloves with a few shreds of ribbon, showed that a worker had recently been busy there.

On the wall a garland of artificial flowers encircled the miniature of a lovely little golden-haired boy, whose face, somehow, seemed familiar to me.

On a small pianette, which was open, lay a pile of music. The two upper pieces were "La Forza del Destino," and "La Pluie de Perles," which were inscribed "To Agnes. From her dear Papa."

Everything bespoke the presence of a neat, brisk, and tidy female resident of elegant tastes ; but in one corner I detected a cavalry forage cap, pretty well worn, and on the end of the mantelpiece, where it had evidently



eluded Mrs. Goldsworthy's duster, the fag-end of a cigar.

I had just made this alarming discovery, when my friend of the last evening entered, and frankly presented me with her hand, half-smiling, and thanking me for the locket, which she at once proceeded to suspend at her neck, saying, as she kissed and hid it in her bosom, that for worlds she would not have lost it!

Ungloved now, I could perceive the delicate beauty of her small hands, and, moreover, that on the third finger of the left there was no marriage ring. Her face was very pale, but singularly beautiful, and her tightly-fitting dress revealed the full symmetry of her arms, waist, and bosom. Her eyes expressed extreme gentleness and sadness, and consorted well with the delicacy of her pure complexion. The extreme redness of her lips seemed rather unnatural, or at least unhealthy; but she coughed frequently, and the consumption, under which I greatly feared she was labouring, made her delicate loveliness still more alluring, and the earnest and searching gaze of her dark blue eyes more interesting and touching.

The common phrases incident to first intro-



ductions and everyday conversations were rapidly despatched, and, while I lingered, hat and whip in hand, I repeated that, but for the purpose of returning her locket, I, as a total stranger, would not have ventured to intrude upon a lady. I begged her to be assured of that.

"Be certain, sir," said she, nervously smoothing the braids of her rich, thick hair, and adjusting the neat white collar that encircled her delicate throat, and edged the neck of her plain grey winsey dress; "be certain that it is no intrusion, but a great kindness, though I do live here almost alone, and—and——"

She paused, and coloured deeply.

"You were anxious about letters last night. I hope this morning has relieved your mind?"

"Alas, no, sir," said she, shaking her pretty head sadly. "The postman has always letters for every one but me. I have been forgotten by those who should have remembered me."

"I can fully share your feelings," said I, with a made-up smile. "I, too, am most anxious for letters that seem never likely to come."



"I am sorry to hear this; but I thought that you gay young men of the world had no sorrows—no troubles, save your debts, and your occasional headaches in the morning; the first to be cured by post-obits, and the second by brandy and seltzer-water."

"Is such your idea?" said I, smiling.

"Yes."

"Well, I have other and more heartfelt sorrows than these."

"How often have I wished that I were a man—a strong one, to fight with the world in all its wiles and strength; to wrestle and grapple with it, and to feel that I was powerful, great—greater than even destiny—instead of being the poor and feeble thing I am! Then could I show mankind——"

What she was about to say I know not. Her eyes were sparkling, and her cheek flushing, as she spoke; but a violent fit of coughing came on. She put her handkerchief to her lips, and when she took it away it was stained with blood.

"Permit me," said I, with kindness, and handed her to a chair.

This access of coughing so promptly brought Mrs. Goldsworthy in that I think she must have been listening outside the door. Her



caresses and care soothed the young lady, though she lapsed into a flood of nervous tears, and, for a minute or so, withdrew.

"Your mistress seems extremely delicate?" I observed.

"Yes, poor thing! She will never again be the girl she was."

"Are you, may I ask, her mother?"

"Her mother? Lawkamercy, no! I ain't worthy to be more than what I am."

"And what is that, my friend?"

"Her servant, poor angel! Her mother is, I am sure, in Heaven."

"Pardon me. I remember that she told me last night that she was an orphan."

"Ay, poor child, a orphan indeed — a orphan of the 'eart," she added, shaking her head, as she became unintentionally poetic.

"I fear my visit excites you," said I, moving towards the door, as the young girl reappeared, and seemed to have quite recovered her composure. "Your cough requires the greatest care, and those open windows——"

"O, I should die without air," she exclaimed, while her eyes sparkled; "for there are times when even my own thoughts seem to stifle me."



"La, miss!" said her attendant, warningly, and glancing impatiently at me.

"A strange girl," thought I; "but can she be subject to flights of fancy—insane?"

"If I can at any time be of service, pray command me, though we shall not be long in Britain now, as we soon start for the Crimea."

"Very soon?" she asked, with her eyes and voice full of earnest inquiry.

"I cannot say exactly when; but soon, certainly."

She pressed her left hand upon her breast, as if to restrain her cough, and cast down her eyelashes. At that moment she seemed remarkably bewitching, soft, modest, and Madonna-like.

I was again about to go, and yet stayed, for I longed to learn, at least, her name.

"And you go cheerfully forth to face danger and death?" she asked, looking up with a mournful smile in her pleading eyes.

"Not cheerfully, for my path is not without its thorns; but for all that I don't dread death, I hope."

"Death!" she said, musingly, as if to herself, while looking at the blood spot on her handkerchief. "Daily I feel myself face to



face with him, and shall bid him welcome when he comes nearer, for death has no terrors for me."

"Don't 'ee talk so, darling," said her follower, with a mixture of sorrow and irritation in her manner; "though he you weeps for is a bad 'un at 'art, and I knows it."

"Oh, don't break mine by saying so, nurse."

"I trust that you only fancy yourself worse than you really are," said I, with genuine sympathy in my tone and manner. "Remember, the long and sweet season of summer is before us. You are so young, and life must still be full of hope to you."

"Hope! oh, no, not of hope! My destiny has already been fulfilled!" she replied, with a strong bitterness of manner; "so hope has done with me."

"Pardon me; but may I ask your name? I told you mine," said I, laying my hand on hers.

She coloured deeply, almost painfully. It was but the hectic flush of a moment, and when it passed away she became pale as marble.

"Captain Norcliff, I think you said?"

"Yes; Newton Calderwood Norcliff—and yours?"



“ Agnes Auriol.”

“ Good heavens !” I almost exclaimed, as the whole mystery of her life and manner burst with a new light upon me.

So my mysterious incognita was that poor girl of whom the mess had whispered. Berkeley’s mistress—Agnes Auriol—the girl whose letter—a heart-breaking one, likely—he had dropped at Calderwood, and which he had burned so carefully when I restored it to him. So *his* were the initials that were on the gold locket at her neck, and *his* were the forage cap and cigar which had attracted my attention on first entering the cottage parlour.

It was certainly an awkward situation for me, this self-introduction and visit. If discovered there, I knew not how far it might compromise me with him, and still more with others whose opinion I valued.

And as thoughts of the Chillinghams and of the mess flashed upon me, I felt that I would gladly have changed places with Sindbad on the whale’s back, or Daniel in the lion’s den.







## CHAPTER XVII.

Oh, for the wings we used to wear,  
When the heart was like a bird,  
And floated through the summer air,  
And painted all it looked on fair,  
And sung to all it heard!  
When fancy put the seal of truth  
On all the promises of youth!

HERVEY.

**T**O have introduced myself abruptly to Mr. De Warr Berkeley's wedded wife, if he had one, might be explained away satisfactorily enough; but, to present myself to Miss Auriol, related as she was to him, there could be no palliation whatever, and in duelling days could have led to but one result—the pistol!

Something of what passed in my mind, together with an air of bewilderment, must have been apparent in my face, for the young lady, after gazing at me earnestly, as if her clear and bright, but dark blue eyes would





read my very soul, looked suddenly down, and said, while her colour came and went, and her bosom heaved painfully—

“I can perceive, Captain Norcliff, that my name explains much to you ; but not all—oh, no, not all. There are secrets in my short but wretched life that you can never learn—secrets known to God and to myself alone !”

“It really explains nothing to me, Miss Auriol,” I replied with a smile, being willing to relieve her embarrassment, by affecting ignorance of that which the whole mess knew—her ambiguous position ; “for I am not aware that—that we ever met before.”

“But you have heard, perhaps—you know Mr. Berkeley ?”

“Of ours—yes ; he was in Scotland with me a few weeks ago.”

“That I know too well for my own peace,” said the girl, coughing spasmodically, and applying her handkerchief to her mouth.

“He is frequently in this quarter, is he not ?”

“Yes.”

“At this pretty cottage, perhaps ?”

“No, sir.”

“Where then—the Reculvers ?”

“At Chillingham Park. Since he has begun



to visit there he scarcely ever comes here. Have you not heard—have you not heard,” she repeated, making a fearful effort at articulation, “that he is to be married to the only daughter and heiress of Lord Chillingham?”

I felt that I became nearly as pale as herself, while replying—

“I certainly have not heard of such an alliance; it is probably the silly rumour of a gossiping neighbourhood.”

She shook her head sadly, and seated herself with an air of lassitude.

“Are you sure that Mr. Berkeley was not here after I escorted you home last night?”

“I am, unfortunately, but too sure. Why do you ask?” she inquired, looking up, while her eyes dilated.

“Because I could have sworn that I passed him on horseback in the dusk.”

“Riding in this direction?”

“No, towards Canterbury.”

“Ah, towards Chillingham Park, no doubt—there shines his loadstar now!”

“And mine too,” thought I, bitterly.

This girl’s intelligence, whether false or true, crushed my heart more than I can describe.

Aware, however, of the imperative neces-



sity for retiring, I took up my hat and bade her adieu ; but for the purpose of learning more of Berkeley's movements, I promised, when riding that way, to call again, and inquire for her health.

"The locket you have just restored was Mr. Berkeley's gift to me upon a fatal day," said she ; "and, believe me, sir, that—that, whatever you may have heard of me, or whatever you may think, I have been 'more sinned against than sinning.'"

In another minute I was in the saddle, and on my way back to Canterbury.

Though she did not know it, nor could she know it, this unfortunate girl had been planting thorns in my breast. I could not believe in the reality of such perfidy on the part of Louisa—of such facility on the part of the haughty Countess, her mother—or of such rapid progress on the part of Berkeley, with all his wealth, the hard-won thousands of the late departed brewer.

How I longed now for the arrival of Cora, who might solve or explain away some of the doubts that surrounded me !

My heart swelled with rage ; and yet I felt that I loved Louisa with a passion that bade fair to turn my brain !



As Miss Auriol would be certain to know something of Berkeley's movements, and as she and her faithful follower, old Mrs. Goldsworthy, might prove invaluable in acquainting me with what passed at Chillingham Park, for they had jealousy to spur on their espionage, I resolved to visit once or twice again the cottage at the Reculvers, when I could do so unseen. This I did, little knowing how greatly the poor girl would interest me in her sad fate, and still less foreseeing that the course I pursued was a perilous one. But the agony of my anxiety, the bitterness of my suspicions, and my love for Louisa, overcame every scruple, and blinded me to everything else.

She, on the other hand, was naturally anxious to learn the movements of Berkeley, whom, notwithstanding his cold desertion, she loved blindly and desperately. Thus we could be useful to each other.

My heart recoiled at times from such a mode of working ; but I could have no other recourse till my cousin Cora came.

As I rode up to the door of the hotel, my heart leaped on seeing Willie Pitblado awaiting me there.

"A letter at last!" I exclaimed, as he came forward.



“From the colonel, sir,” said he, touching his cockaded hat.

“The colonel?” I repeated, in disappointment and surprise, as I tore open the note, the contents of which ran briefly thus:—

“MY DEAR NORCLIFF,—As the barracks here are becoming uncomfortably crowded, by the Indian depôts and so forth, your troop is detached to Canterbury for a week or two, to share the quarters of the hussars. You will remain there, probably, till the route comes. You need not return to head-quarters, unless you choose; but may report yourself to the lieutenant-colonel commanding the consolidated cavalry depôt at Canterbury. This is a stranger-day at mess. We are to have an unusual number of guests, and the band. Wish you were with us.

Believe me, &c., &c.,

“LIONEL BEVERLEY, Lieut.-Col.

“P.S.—You will drill the troop once daily to the sword and lance exercise on horse-back.”

“How lucky!” thought I. “I shall have Canterbury for the basis of my operations, and



the Reculvers for an advanced post ; quartered here, and Chillingham close by ! When does the troop march in, Willie ?”

“To-morrow forenoon, sir, under Mr. Jocelyn.”

“Good. You will take my card to the barrack-master, and my horses to the stables, and receive over my quarters. I shall remain at the hotel until the troop comes in.”

I did not ride to the Reculvers on that afternoon, though I scoured every road in the vicinity of the city, by Sturry, Bramling, and Horton.

Next morning I went for a mile or two in the direction of Ospringe, and soon saw the troop advancing leisurely, with their horses at a walk, along the dusty Kentish highway, their keen lance-heads glittering with all their bright appointments in the sunshine, their scarlet and white banneroles, and the long plumes in the men’s square-topped caps dancing in the wind, as I trotted up and joined them, though in mufti.

My lieutenant, Frank Jocelyn, and the cornet, Sir Harry Scarlett, were both pleasant and gentlemanly young men, and would have been a most welcome addition to my residence in Canterbury, but for the hopes, the fears,



and plans which occupied me. They asked me how I liked the cathedral city, and there was a smile on their faces, which, when taken in conjunction with my secret thoughts, galled and fretted me. Yet I could not notice it.

Accompanied by a multitude of the great "unwashed," we proceeded straight to those spacious barracks which are erected for cavalry, artillery, and infantry, on the road that leads to the Isle of Thanet, and there the lancers were rapidly "told off" to their quarters, the horses stabled, corned, and watered.

We dined that evening with a hussar corps, of whose mess we were made honorary members while we remained in Canterbury, and from Jocelyn I learned incidentally that for the last three days Berkeley had scarcely been in barracks. The hope that I had harassed myself in vain passed away now, and fear alone remained.

While the first set of decanters were traversing the table, I slipped away unnoticed, and without changing my uniform, took the road at a rasping pace direct for the Reculvers. The moon was just rising from the sea, and the last notes of the curfew were dying away, as I drew up at the door at Miss Auriol's cottage.



She was alone, and sitting at tea, to which she bade me welcome, in a manner that showed she half doubted the honesty of my visit, and betrayed such emotions of shame, confusion, and awkwardness, I felt myself quite an intruder. But, I simply asked if she had heard more of Berkeley.

She admitted that she had, and stated mournfully that for the last three days he had been constantly at the park, thus confirming what Frank Jocelyn had told me.

In the course of another visit or two, I gradually learned piecemeal all the poor girl's unhappy history, and how she became the victim, first of evil fortune, and afterwards of a cold-blooded man of the world like De Warr Berkeley.







## CHAPTER XVIII.

Where are th' illusions bright and vain  
That fancy boded forth ?  
Sunk to their silent caves again,  
Auroræ of the north !

Oh ! who would live those visions o'er,  
All brilliant though they seem,  
Since earth is but a desert shore,  
And life a weary dream !

MOIR.

**S**HE was the orphan daughter of the poor curate of a secluded village on the borders of Wales. Her mother, also the daughter of a curate, had died when Agnes was very young. She was thus left to be the sole prop and comfort of the old man's declining years, and he loved her dearly—all the more dearly that, with a little brother, a beautiful, golden-haired boy (the same whose miniature I remarked), she alone survived of all their children, ten in number.

The rest had perished early ; for all pos-



sessed that terrible heritage, the seeds of which Agnes was now maturing in her own bosom—consumption.

One by one the old clergyman had seen them borne forth from his little thatched parsonage, under the ivy-clad lyke-gate of the village church, and laid by their mother's side, a row of little grassy graves, where the purple and golden crocuses grew in spring, and the white-eyed marguerites in summer, all as gaily as if the last hopes of a broken heart were not buried beneath them.

In the fulness of time the shadow of death again fell on the old parsonage, and the curate's white hairs were laid in the dust, close by the quiet little Saxon church in which he had ministered so long; and now the ten graves of the once loving household lay side by side, without a stone to mark them.

"In the days before this last calamity befel me, Captain Norcliff," said Miss Auriol, "when my poor father was wont to take my face caressingly between his tremulous old hands, and kissing my forehead, and smoothing my hair, would tell me that my name, Agnes, signified gentleness—a lamb, in fact—that it came from the Latin word *Agnus*;



and when he would bless me with a heart as pure as ever offered up a prayer to God, how little could I foresee the creature I was to become! Oh, my father—oh, my mother! what a life mine has been; and after my father died, what a youth!

“I have often thought of the words of Mademoiselle de l’Enclos, when, in the flush of her beauty, she exclaimed to the Prince of Condé, ‘Had any one proposed such a life to me at one time, I should have died of grief and fright!’

“So my father passed away; the new incumbent came to take our mansion, with its humble furniture at a valuation. After paying a few debts, with a small sum, I found myself with my little brother, who was sickly and ailing, in London, seeking subsistence by exerting the talents I possessed—music, chiefly, for I am pretty well accomplished as a musician.”

She continued to tell me of all her heart-breaking struggles, her perils and bitter mortifications, and of the acute sufferings of that little fair-headed brother, on whom all her love and hope were centred; and how, daily, in the fetid atmosphere of a humble lodging, far away from the green fields, the bright



sunshine and the rustling woods of that dear old parsonage on the slope of the Denbigh hills, the poor child grew worse and more feeble ; and how her crushed heart was wrung as her little store of money melted away like snow in spring ; her few ornaments went next, and no employment came.

How misery depressed, and horrible forebodings' of the future haunted her ; how she remembered all the harrowing tales she had read—and such as we may daily read—of the poor in London, and how they perish under the feet of the vast multitude who rush onward in the race for existence, or in the pursuit of pleasure ; and how thoughts and doubts of God himself, and of His mercy or justice, at times came over her, even as they came at times now, when the man she loved and trusted most on earth had deceived her.

Employed at last as a hired musician, she was out frequently to play the piano at balls and evening parties, for half a guinea per night, in London, and thus made a slender subsistence for the suffering child and for herself.

After receiving her fee from the hand of some sleepy butler or supercilious upper-servant, as she nightly wrapped her scanty



cloak about her, and, quitting the heated and crowded rooms, hurried through the dark, wet, and snowy streets to an almost squalid lodging, which even her native neatness failed to brighten, and to the couch where the poor, thin, wakeful boy, with his great, sad, earnest eyes awaited her ; ere long she began to find a cold and cough settling upon her delicate chest ; and then the terror seized her that if she became seriously ill, and failed to obey her patrons at the nearest music-shop, where would the boy get food ? And if she died—in a hospital, perhaps—what would be his fate, his end, in other and less tender hands than hers ?

Then, as she wept over him in the silence of the night, and remembered the prayers her old father had taught her, she would strive to become more composed, and to sleep like that child that lay hushed in her bosom ; but her dreams, if not full of terrors for the present, were ever haunted by the sad memories of the past ; for the kind faces and sweet smiles of the dead came vividly before her, and the familiar sound of their voices seemed to mingle in the drowsy hum of the London streets without, or with the murmur of her native Dee, and the pleasant rustle of the



summer leaves in the woods of the old parsonage she would never see again, or the green hills of Denbigh that overshadowed it.

Foreseeing and fearing that the child would be taken from her, she assumed her pencil, in the use of which she was very skilful and accomplished, and thus produced the likeness that hung in her little parlour. In this labour of love I was struck by the close resemblance it bore to herself.

On one occasion, at some West-end party, she remembered having seen me. On beholding me in uniform now the recollection came fully upon her ; and it would seem that, on the night in question, when all else had forgotten the pale and weary musician amid the crush and merriment of the supper-room, I had sent her cake and wine, and the former she had secretly pocketed for her little brother ; but of this casual rencontre I had no recollection whatever.

On another occasion, it happened that the neglected and lonely, but useful "young person," past whom youth, beauty, and merriment whirled in white satin and diamonds, lace and flowers, attracted the attention of Mr. De Warr Berkeley. Her soft and wistful glances at her former equals caught his



watchful eye; and the graceful politeness with which she acceded to their contrary suggestions to play quicker or slower, together with the great brilliance of her execution, were all remarked by him.

It was on one of those nights, like some others, when old companions passed her by in the waltz and galop, and former friends too, without a smile or glance of recognition; yet, as she thought of the child at home, with a crushed and swollen heart she played on and on mechanically.

Some unusual slight had been put upon her, and while she played, in the bitterness of her soul, her hot tears fell upon the keys of the piano. At that moment for Berkeley to introduce himself was an easy matter. He did it so quietly, so respectfully, that the poor girl felt soothed. She never mistrusted him, and, as her evil fortune would have it, he met her three nights, almost consecutively, at three different places. An intimacy was thus established.

On the third, the rain was pouring through the desolate streets of a suburban district in torrents. The soaked shrubbery and the railings of the garden shone flickering through the lamp-light, and the dark clouds swept



past in gloomy masses overhead. It was a wild night, or morning rather, and not even a policeman, in his oilskin cape, seemed to be abroad.

Gathering her threadbare shawl tightly round her, Agnes, terrified and bewildered, was setting forth afoot, timid and shivering, on her way home, having some miles of London to traverse, when Berkeley, who had artfully lingered to the last, respectfully offered her a seat in his cabriolet, and by setting her down where she mentioned, discovered her residence, and marked her for his prey.

Berkeley's attentions filled the girl with gratitude instead of alarm, and he soon inspired her with a passion for him. "The more a young girl believes in purity," says a writer, "the more readily she abandons herself, if not to her lover, at least to her love ; because, being without distrust, she is without strength ; and, to make himself beloved by such a one, is a triumph which any man of five-and-twenty may secure himself whenever he pleases. And this is true, though young girls are surrounded by extreme vigilance and every possible rampart."

To trace the gradual and downward course



she trod, and how artfully Berkeley gained an ascendancy over her by the interest he affected to feel in her little ailing brother, and how lavishly he supplied the means of such comforts as the poor child had never possessed even in his father's homely parsonage, can neither be for me to describe, nor my reader to know.

Suffice that the gentle Agnes fell into the snare, as our common ancestress did before, and became what I now found her to be.

\* \* \* \* \*

From that hour she had never known real peace, and the memory of her parents, blended with the agonies of remorse, haunted her day and night. As a drowning wretch will cling to straws, so clung she to the desperate hope that Berkeley would love her while life lasted, and that he would redeem his promise by marrying her, for she loved him blindly and devotedly, with all the strength of her young heart, and of a first and only passion.

The change now, from work all day and music all night, with trudging to and fro, through rain or sleet, was doubtless great ; but the change brought with it no joy, no peace of mind.

Had she a thousand caprices, in the first flush of her amour, her roué lover would have



gratified them all ; but, luckily, her tastes were simple, and she shrank from proffered boxes at the play or opera, from rural parties, and everything that made her public.

But retribution was coming now ; her tears and sorrow fretted him, and he began to absent himself. The luxuries with which he surrounded her brought to her no happiness, and to her little brother no health, for the child died, passing peacefully away one night in his sleep, and was buried—not in the pleasant green village burying-ground where his kindred lay—but in a horrid fetid London churchyard, amid the human loam of ages ; and when the little silver-mounted coffin was carried away, Agnes Auriol, as she cast a bouquet of lily-of-the-valley on it, felt that now she had no real tie on earth, unless it was her lover, and from him even she shrank at such a time as this.

She stood alone by the little grave, the only mourner there. She had thought of asking Berkeley to accompany her ; but, somehow, his presence would seem a species of pollution by the grave of the pure and sinless little boy, and the face of her father seemed ever before her.

Her unwelcome repentance fretted him, and



without compunction he saw the agony of her spirit, and how the lustre faded from her eye, and the roses died in her cheek. Sedulously she endeavoured to conceal the sorrow that embittered her existence, as she perceived that it only served to disgust him. And as this sorrow grew, so did her strength diminish, and the hectic flush of consumption and premature decline spread over her delicate little face.

He was frequently absent from her now for weeks, and those periods seemed insupportable, for the love of him had become a habit; and to break that habit seemed as if it would snap the feeble tenure of her life.

He ceased, too, to supply her with money. Her former musical connexions were completely broken. She was frequently without the means of subsistence save by the sale of her ornaments; and at last she had parted with all, save her mother's wedding ring, which she wished to be buried with her.

In January last she discovered that Berkeley was at Calderwood Glen in Scotland. She wrote to him a most piteous letter, to which, however, he accorded no reply; and at that time she must have died, had her nurse, Goldsworthy—an old and faithful servant of her father's,



not discovered and brought her to this cottage near the Reculvers.

When the lancers were at Maidstone, Berkeley had visited her from time to time, and pretended still his old views of marriage to amuse her, but trammelled with secresy ; and latterly he had derided her letters entirely. Moreover, she had come to the bitter and stinging conclusion that he hated her, as she possessed letters of his which legally compromised him.

He who does another person an injury never forgives him for what he has endured. He alike hates and fears him ; and in this spirit did Berkeley fear and hate the poor girl whom he had wronged.

Such was the plain, unvarnished story of Agnes Auriol, which she related in the intervals that were unbroken by a hard, consumptive, and, undoubtedly, " churchyard cough."

" I have but one wish now," she added, as she lay back exhausted ; " and that I cannot gratify."

" Is it so difficult to achieve ?" I asked, in a low voice.

" There are insuperable difficulties."

" And this desire ?"



"Is to leave this place for ever," she said, almost in a whisper, while the hot tears ran unheeded down her pale cheeks; and—and——"

"Go where?"

"To look on poor papa's grave, and on dear mamma's, and then die."

"No, no, do not speak in this hopeless manner," I urged, feeling that I, a young officer of cavalry, was a very unfitting comforter or adviser at such a time; and I rose to retire, for the evening was now far advanced.

"This craving is so strong in the poor lamb's heart, sir, that she will be a dyin' as sure as we look on her, unless it be gratified, and athout a angel comes from heaven, I don't know how it is to be done," said Mrs. Goldsworthy, weeping noisily, like all people of her class, as she ushered me to the door, and to my horse, which was pawing the ground impatiently, with the dew on his coat and saddle.

"Take her there without loss of time, my good friend," said I.

"She divided her last crown with a poor fisherman yesterday, to get some comforts for his sick wife."



"Good heavens! Is she then without means?"

"Quite, sir; and if Mr. Berkeley——"

I struck my spurred heels into the gravel at the sound of his name, and exclaimed—

"Poor girl, I shall give her the means."

"You, sir?"

"Yes."

"Oh, sir—sir—but she'll never take it from you," said Mrs. Goldsworthy, sobbing into her apron with great vociferation.

"She must; and let her remember me in her prayers when I am far away. At eight to-morrow evening I shall be here again for the last time, my worthy friend, and will supply her with what she requires."

Before the nurse could reply I was in my saddle, and had closed the iron gate; but just as I rode off, I nearly trod down a man who was muffled in a poncho cloak, and who leant against the gate pillar, whether listening or asleep, I knew not; yet, had I looked more closely, I might have detected the moustached face of my quondam friend, Mr. De Warr Berkeley. For this loiterer, or eavesdropper, proved in the sequel to be no other than he.

To outflank me, and to place himself, his fortune (and his debts), at the complete



disposal of Lady Louisa Loftus, was now the plan—the game—of my friendly brother officer; and with what success we shall see ere long.

I was full of thought while riding slowly home to the barracks on the Thanet Road; I longed for Cora's coming to unravel the mystery of Louisa's conduct, and yet dreaded to face my cousin or broach the matter to her. I was inspired with sympathy for the poor lost creature I had just quitted, and full of indulgence for her mode of life, and excuses for her fate and fall. Her singular beauty greatly aided emotions such as these, for the morbid state of her health lent a wondrous lustre to her dark blue eyes, and marvellous transparency to her lovely complexion, and I felt extreme satisfaction that it was in my power to gratify a wish that was, perhaps, her last one—to pay a pilgrimage to the resting-place of her parents.

The sweet verse of honest Goldsmith occurred to me—

The only art her guilt to cover,  
To hide her shame from every eye,  
To give repentance to her lover,  
And wring his bosom is—to die!

At the same time, I thought it very doubt-



ful whether any such catastrophe would wring the padded bosom of Berkeley.

Had Agnes Auriol been a wrinkled crone, it may be a matter for consideration whether I—a young officer of lancers—would have been so exceedingly philanthropic in her cause. I hope I should.

On arriving at the barracks, my first task was to despatch Pitblado by the night train to head-quarters, with a note to M'Goldrick, the paymaster, for at least fifty pounds, saying I wanted the money, and must have it by noon to-morrow.







## CHAPTER XIX.

But the spite on't, is no praise  
Is due at all to me;  
Love with me hath made mad no staies  
Had it any been but she.

Had it any been but she,  
And that very face,  
There had been at least ere this  
Twelve dozen in her place.

SIR JOHN SUCKLING.



PROMPTLY, by an early train, Willie Pitblado arrived with the cash from M'Goldrick, and with that which alike puzzled and provoked me—a brief note from my friend, Jack Studhome, the adjutant, advising me that, from rumours he, Scriven, and Wilford had heard—rumours circulated insidiously, he knew not how or by whom, in the billiard-rooms we frequented, and indeed about Maidstone barracks generally—my visits



to a certain romantic cottage near the Reculvers were well known ; that I might mean no wrong certainly ; but was it judicious or wise to get myself into a scrape with a brother officer ?

There was no mistaking the object of this friendly epistle of Jack's, and it filled me with fresh anger against Berkeley. Who but he could insidiously spread those reports concerning what he alone knew or could affect an interest in ! I knew his subtle and crooked mode of working ; and his ultimate object was undoubtedly that this rumour against me should ere long reach Chillingham Park.

Yet, removed as I was from head-quarters, I could do nothing in the matter, and for the present had only "to grin and bear it."

Morning parade over, in obedience to Colonel Beverley's order, I was putting the troop through a course of sword and lance exercise personally, and was so earnestly engaged in the work of the moment that I did not perceive a dashing phaeton, drawn by a pair of spanking grey ponies, attended by an outrider in livery, on a showy bay horse, that entered the barrack-yard, and drew up close



by, as if its occupants wished to observe the progress of the drill.

After the lapse of a few minutes, Troop Sergeant-Major Stapylton trotted his horse forward, and said—

“ Beg pardon, Captain Norcliff, but some friends of yours are waiting for you, sir.”

Turning in my saddle, how great was my surprise to see Lady Louisa and Cora in the phaeton, which was driven by Berkeley, who was attired in a very accurate suit of forenoon mufti. Dismounting, I sheathed my sword, threw my reins to Stapylton, and saying to my lieutenant, Jocelyn—

“ Frank, like a good fellow, finish off this piece of drill for me, please,” advanced at once to greet my fair friends, whose visit, I felt, was due to Cora.

“ How interesting this is !” said Lady Louisa, presenting her carefully-gloved little hand, with a brilliant smile, as she proceeded to imitate my last order, “ Prepare to dismount ! one ; the lance to be raised out of the bucket, by the right hand sliding down to the extent of the arm ; two—ah, I forget two ; you are quite an enthusiast.”

Under this banter I detected, or thought



so, a deep glance of anxiety and hidden meaning, more especially as she added—

“You evidently think more of this drill-sergeant’s work than of me.”

My heart was so filled with sudden joy that I knew not what I said ; but I kissed Cora’s hand to conceal my confusion.

“And what of good Sir Nigel, Cora ?” I asked.

“Papa comes to England to see you go away, and to take me home,” replied my cousin, in a calm voice ; “home to Calderwood, when all is over.”

“All is over ?”

“I mean when the army departs.”

“And you are on leave, I perceive, Berkeley ?”

“Aw—haw—yes, for a day or so. Doocid bore the work at Maidstone,” he drawled out.

I was obliged as yet to dissemble, though there was an ill-concealed air of smiling triumph about my comrade that gave me considerable uneasiness.

“And now, sir, what have you to say for yourself ?” said Lady Louisa, tapping me on the epaulette with her parasol, and speaking



of such severity. "So the rules of civility are to be inverted to suit your convenience: the ladies are to wait upon the gentlemen. Quartered actually in Canterbury, yet you never came near us."

"My Louisa," I was beginning, yet not knowing what to say, as I could never imagine how she doubted the reason of my non-appearance at Chillingham.

"What am I to think of it?" she continued, smiling.

Mr. Berkeley laughed. "I believe the fellow meant we were on the eve of a coolness."

"Remember my constitutional timidity," I replied.

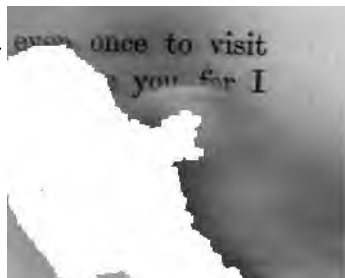
"Timidity in a captain of lancers!" she exclaimed, laughing.

"I ventured to hope that the earl, at least, might have remembered me."

"You knew that I was at Chillingham, did it not?" she observed, with a pouting air of pique.

"Yes," said I, soothed by her glance of pardon and reproach: "Sir Nigel's letter told me

Let you never came even once to visit  
and I longed so much for you for I





had a good deal to gossip about concerning our residence at Calderwood."

"But the earl omitted to leave a card, and your mamma never wrote; and then the rules of society!" I urged, still harping on my grievance.

"The rules of fiddlesticks! When did lovers ever heed them?" she asked, in a rapid whisper, while Berkeley addressed a few words to Jocelyn, and while her dark and sparkling eyes flashed a glance that made me forget all. "Well, here are the cards of papa and mamma, with an express invitation to Chillingham. You will dine with us this evening, wont you?"

"With pleasure."

"Papa and mamma are to dine at the Priory, but on another day you shall see them."

"And the hour?"

"Eight."

"Eight!" I repeated, for that was the very hour of my appointment with Agnes Auriol, and the park lay in an opposite direction from the barracks. Here was a dilemma! But I resolved, if possible, to keep faith with both, and said—



with an air of mock severity. "So the rules of society are to be inverted to suit your lancer tastes; the ladies are to wait upon the gentlemen? Quartered actually in Canterbury, and yet you never came near us."

"Lady Louisa," I was beginning, yet not knowing what to say, as I could never imagine that she doubted the reason of my non-appearance at Chillingham.

"What am I to think of it!" she continued, smiling.

Berkeley laughed. I believe the fellow thought we were on the eve of a coolness.

"Remember my constitutional timidity," I urged.

"Timidity in a captain of lancers!" she exclaimed, laughing.

"I ventured to hope that the earl, at least, might have remembered me."

"You knew that I was at Chillingham Park, it appears?" she observed, with a pretty air of pique.

"Yes," said I, soothed by her glance of fond reproach; "Sir Nigel's letter told me so."

"Yet you never came even once to visit us, and I longed so much to see you, for I



had a good deal to gossip about concerning our residence at Calderwood."

"But the earl omitted to leave a card, and your mamma never wrote; and then the rules of society!" I urged, still harping on my grievance.

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"Excuse me, pray ; but on reflection I find it impossible to be present at that hour."

"Indeed !"

"But I shall present myself soon after in the drawing-room."

"What prevents you ?" she asked, raising her dark eyebrows.

"Duty, unfortunately."

"In that case I must excuse you. Allegiance to me should not precede that which you owe to the Queen. Till this evening, then, adieu."

She presented her hand, and bowed with inimitable grace. I took it in mine, and lingering, would, I am sure, have kissed it, but for the troop close by, and dozens of idlers, who were lolling at the barrack windows in their shell-jackets or shirt-sleeves. There was a glorious smile in her bright face that contrasted strongly with the sad and wistful glance of Cora's soft dark eyes ; and, as the phaeton swept away from the barrack-square, I forgot to bid adieu to Berkeley, though I certainly wished him in very warm quarters indeed. I forgot even to address Cora, or rejoin the troop. I forgot all about Studhome's letter and its import ; and, leaving



Jocelyn to finish the drill as he pleased, walked mechanically to my quarters, filled by a great revulsion of feeling, and remembering only that Louisa loved me—loved me still!

Of that day's close could I have foreseen the end!

I counted the hours that intervened between the time that I should be at the park. I resolved, if possible, to leave nothing undone to gain the good opinion of the earl and countess; and, on after thought, I regretted that I had excused my appearance at dinner, and believed that I might have paid my last visit to the cottage at the Reculvers an hour or so earlier, and performed my task of philanthropy, even at the risk of being seen; though, sooth to say, I rather dreaded that event, circumstanced as I was with Louisa; and since the clouds that lowered upon my horizon were dispersed now, the unfortunate victim of Berkeley could be of no further use to me.

Berkeley had been watching my interview with Louisa narrowly, and took in our whole situation at a glance, or thought he did so.

He feared that Lady Louisa's gaiety was a



little too spasmodic to be real, in one who was usually calm and reserved ; and, hence, that it cloaked some deeper emotion than met the eye. My sensations at her appearance, and during the whole interview, must have been apparent even to a less interested spectator than Berkeley, and his whole soul became stirred by emotions of jealousy, rivalry, and revenge !

Having had the full *entrée* of Chillingham Park for the last month and more, he had, as he conceived, made a fair lodgment, to use a military phrase, in the body of the place—that he had the cards in his own hands, and should lose no time in discovering how Lady Louisa was affected towards him.

Cool, vain, insolent, and unimpassioned, this blasé parvenu thought over his plans while the phaeton rolled along the Canterbury Road ; and the aristocratic aspect of the coroneted gate and castellated lodge, the far extent of green sward stretching under the stately elms, closely shorn and carefully rolled—sward that had never been ploughed since the days, perhaps, when the Scot and Englishman measured their swords at Flodden and Pinkey, kindled brighter the fire of ambition



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with him, and made him resolve at all hazards to supplant me.

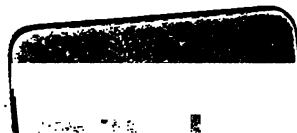
One fact he had resolved on—that, though the days of bodily assassination had gone out of English society, or existed only in the pages of sensational romance, if he failed to obtain Louisa Loftus, that I should never succeed.

END OF VOL. I.











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